

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST • COWBOY • CARNIVAL; OR, THE ROUND UP AT ROARING RANCH.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



Swinging himself over, Wild hung from the saddle with his head almost touching the ground. Then he fired at the two glass balls with both revolvers, not missing a shot. The sorrel was running with the swiftness of an antelope.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S COWBOY CARNIVAL

OR,

The Round Up at Roaring Ranch.

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

SAM SPUD, FROM ROARING RANCH.

The evening at dusk in the early spring some years ago, a horseman galloped into the hustling little mining town of Weston, Dakota, and dismounted in front of the leading hotel of the town.

It was a common occurrence for horsemen to ride into the town, since it was a sort of center for the southern portion of the Black Hills country, but there was such an air of recklessness and braggadocio about this particular horseman that he was bound to attract some attention.

That he was a cowboy was plainly evident by his dress and general appearance, for he was not lacking in anything from the high-top boots to the sombrero and the coiled lariat that hung to the pommel of his saddle.

Leaving his broncho standing right where he had halted it, the stranger—for he was a stranger to the few who were standing in front of the hotel—headed for the bar, which he could see through the doorway.

"I want some bug-juice, and I want it quick!" he bawled, slapping his hand on the bar with a jar that made the glasses jingle. "I'm Sam Spud, from Roarin' Ranch, an' I'm as dry as a fish 'outer water."

"All right, sir. Here's your medicine," retorted the man behind the bar, as he pushed over the bottle and glass. "Jest wet yer dryness to yer heart's content."

"You seem to have an easy way with you," remarked

the cowboy, as he filled his glass. "Well, that's what I like to see."

"We're all hustlers here in Weston, but we believe in doin' things by ther easiest way, for all that. How does ther liquor suit yer, stranger?"

"That's putty good stuff. I calculate that I'll have another drink of it."

"Go ahead. That's what I keep it for—to sell."

The stranger swallowed another glass of the "bug-juice," as he termed it, and then fixing his eyes on the man behind the bar, observed:

"You're quite a likely sort of hotel man, I reckon."

"Well, I try to treat my customerse fair and square," was the reply.

"What's your name?"

"Brown's my name."

"Then you're ther proprietor, hey? I seen ther sign over ther door which reads, 'Brown's Gazoo.'"

"Yes, I'm ther boss. I heard you say you was from Roarin' Ranch. How's things over there?"

"Why, do you know anything about Roarin' Ranch?"

"I've heard considerable about it. Ther young feller what owns it is a particular friend of mine."

"Young Wild West is ther feller, ain't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, he's jest ther feller what I've come here to see. They says he's a regular tornado at ridin' a horse an' shootin' a gun, an' as I am somethin' on that myself, I'm jest itchin' to see what he kin do. Old Spofford, ther manager of Roarin' Ranch, sent me over here with a letter to Young Wild West, but I know jest what's in it,

though I didn't see it writ, or I hain't read it. Ther boys over at ther ranch voted unanimously ter hold what they call a carnival when they round up ther cattle next week, an' they all want Young Wild West ter come over an' manage it fur 'em. I could do that part of it all right, 'cause there ain't a man livin' what kin do as much with a horse and revolver as I kin. They all knowed this, but they seemed to think that ther owner of ther ranch oughter have ther honor of bein' at ther head of ther thing. If I'd been on ther ranch longer it might have been different, too, but as I've only been workin' there a month I, of course, gave in to 'em. They drew lots to see who was ter ride over ter Weston with ther letter from thr manager, an' it fell to me. Now I want to see ther young feller what owns Roarin' Ranch, who, they say, is a nip-squicher at everything he tackles. I'm goin' ter hunt up Young Wild West right now before I eat my supper, 'cause it's my duty to deliver ther letter ter him right away. Where kin I find him, boss?"

"Right here, my friend!"

The cowboy had been so earnest in what he was telling the hotelkeeper that he had failed to notice the entrance of a handsome young fellow, who had paused at the bar just as he took his second drink.

Brown had seen him, though, but he had not said a word.

"Here I am, my friend! I'm Young Wild West," said the handsome boy, stepping forward. "Did I hear you say that you had a message for me?"

"That's what you did, if you're Young Wild West," and the cowboy, not the least abashed, went into a pocket and produced a rather dirty looking envelope. "Here she is, boss!"

Sam Spud, as he had introduced himself, was doing his best to carry out the reckless, bragging manner he had adopted on entering the hotel, but when he saw the athletic form and handsome face that was framed by a wealth of chestnut flowing hair there was just the least bit of hesitancy about him.

And no wonder!

Young Wild West, commonly called the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Deadshot of the West, besides being a perfect type of young manhood, possessed a personal magnetism that but few could resist.

The boy looked at the address on the envelope to assure himself that it was for him, and then tore it open and read the letter that was within, while the cowboy leaned against the counter and watched him.

"All right," said he, looking at Sam Spud. "I suppose you are going to wait to ride over with us when we go back?"

"Yes, I reckon that would be about the size of it," was the reply.

"Well, I'm glad I heard you express yourself as you did. So you are a sort of champion cowboy, are you?"

"I reckon there's no rubbin' that out," and Spud drew himself to his full height and nodded rather proudly.

"And you think you would be fully capable of managing the carnival they propose to hold over at Roaring Ranch?"

"Well, boss, I don't want that it should offend you for me sayin' that. I don't know as I would have said it if I had known you was here. Of course there's no rubbin' it out that there ain't no man anywhere in ther north-west what kin equal me at doin' fancy ridin' an' shootin' an' doin' tricks with a cayuse. You'd have ter go to Texas to find one that would come anywhere near me. I've been all over an' I know putty much what I'm talkin' about when I say this. But I'm workin' for Spofford, an' Spofford is workin' for you, an' there's no use in sayin' things that might make you mad. You are a good one at ther game, they say, an' you might think I'm insinuatn' things when I talk like I did. I like my job at Roarin' Ranch, an' I don't want you to git mad at me 'cause I've said too much, an' make me lose it."

"Oh, don't worry on that score," was the quick reply, and Young Wild West smiled. "If the only fault you've got is your mouth you need not worry in the least. I am sure you would not offend me if you were to beat me in a riding race to defeat me at any kind of shooting. There are lots in the world who can do that, I fancy."

"There might be," spoke up the man behind the bar, "but there ain't any of 'em ever been found yet."

The cowboy turned and looked at Brown rather seriously.

"You've seen a little of everythin' in ther line, I s'pose," he remarked.

"I reckon so."

He would have said more, but a look from Young Wild West stopped him.

"Did you ever see a man snuff out a candle with a bullet from his six-shooter while ridin' at full speed?" asked the cowboy.

"I don't know as I have jest exactly seen that done."

"Huh! I thought so. Well, I kin do that little trick."

"You're a good one, then."

The few men who were in the place had been listening attentively to what was being said, and they all bore broad grins when they heard Sam Spud make the last remark.

Just then two others entered.

One of them was a tall man, with long hair and a heavy mustache, and the other was a young fellow of perhaps twenty, who had quite a handsome and dashing appearance.

They were attired in hunting suits, the same as Young Wild West, and looked as though they were thorough Westerners.

These two were the partners of Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie, and Jim Dart, respectively.

Young Wild West turned to them when they entered.

"Boys," said he, "this is Sam Spud, from Roaring Ranch. He has just arrived with a message from Alex Spofford, inviting us to go over and attend the round-up and take part in the Cowboy Carnival which they have arranged to have over there next week. What do you think about going?"

"You kin count me in, I reckon!" retorted Cheyenne Charlie, as he took a good look at the messenger.

"And I am sure I would like to go," added Jim Dart, following the example of the tall man and sizing up the messenger.

"All right, then. We will go over. We will take Arietta, Anna and Eloise with us, if they can make arrangements to go."

"I reckon they can make arrangements all right," observed Cheyenne Charlie, who had served a few years as a government scout and was hardened to the ways of the wild West. "They'll only be too glad to go."

"Goin' to take wimmen over to Roarin' Ranch, hey?" asked the cowboy.

"Oh, they have been there before," retorted Wild. "They are quite used to the saddle, so it will simply be a pleasure for them to ride over there."

"Oh! Well, I reckon you people know what you're doin'. Say, landlord, kin I git accommodated here until we git ready ter go back?"

"Certainly," replied Brown.

"Give him the best you have, Brown, and charge it me," spoke up Young Wild West.

"Thank you, boss!" said the cowboy. "Spofford said now it wouldn't cost me anythin' while I stayed in town."

"This man is the crack cowboy of the ranch, so he says," remarked our hero, turning to his partners. "He is the best in this part of the country, too. He can snuff a candle with a shot from his revolver while riding at full speed."

"Well, I don't see as there's anythin' so wonderful about that," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, who was one of the kind who generally speak their mind. "I kin do that twice out of three times myself."

"You kin?" asked Sam Spud.

"I reckon so."

"Have you ever done it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Where?"

"Well, I can't jest exactly remember where it was that I done it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" the cowboy laughed. "I've heard fellers like you talk afore," he said.

The scout got a little mad at this.

"Why don't you say that I'm a liar, you measly coyote?" he cried.

"Well, if it'll make you feel better I'll say it."

"Go ahead. It will make me feel better."

"Well, then, if you say you've snuffed out a candle twice out of three times while ridin' at full speed, you lie!"

Cheyenne Charlie made a grab for the man, but Young Wild West caught him by the arm.

"Don't hurt him, Charlie," he remarked, smilingly.

"Don't hurt me!" gasped the man, turning upon the

boy as quick as a flash. "Why, you young rooster, you don't suppose he could hurt me, do yer?"

"See here, Sam Spud," was the quick reply. "I guess it's about time you were taken down a peg. You have called me a young rooster, and before that you told this man he lied. Now I'm going to punish you for being so forward. I am going to spank you!"

There was a lightning like move on the part of Young Wild West, and then up went the heels of the cowboy, and he landed on the floor on his stomach!

CHAPTER II.

OUR FRIENDS ARRIVE AT ROARING RANCH.

There was a roar of laughter from those present when Young Wild West threw the conceited cowboy to the floor.

They all knew our hero, and had been expecting for some time that he would teach the fellow a new trick.

Wild was of the opinion that Sam Spud was a pretty good sort of fellow, but he thought he had altogether too good an opinion of himself.

The man was not talking in the proper way before the person who furnished the money to pay his wages.

If he did not take him in hand our hero was certain that Cheyenne Charlie would, and in that case the affair might end in a shot or two being fired.

Such a proceeding would probably end in the sudden death of the cowboy.

That was why he seized the man and threw him on his stomach, after first promising to spank him.

When Young Wild West promised a thing of that kind he always kept his promise.

He had no sooner landed Sam Spud where he wanted him than he put his knees in the small of his back.

Then he began to do as he had threatened.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

He gave it to the cowboy good and hard.

In vain did the fellow try to get up.

Every time he made an effort the knees pressed into his back all the harder, and he was forced to finally remain still.

"When you are satisfied just sing out," said Wild, quietly smiling at the spectators. "You brought this all on yourself, and I am only spanking you for you own good."

"I've got enough! Let up!" was the quick reply.

"All right!" and the Young Prince of the Saddle sprang to his feet.

Sam Spud got up, looking very much crestfallen.

"It's all right, boss," he said, humbly. "I ain't goin' ter say a word. You served me jest right. I'm always puttin' my foot in it."

"Well, I am glad you take it that way," retorted Wild.

"Now go and get your supper, and don't go to bragging any more. If there is anything I dislike, it is to hear a person bragging of what he can do."

"An' what he can't do, too," put in Cheyenne Charlie.

The scout was certainly down on Sam Spud for being called a liar, and he meant that the fellow should apologize before they were through with each other.

But Young Wild West had plainly let him know that he did not want the quarrel to be continued just then, and as Charlie had the greatest respect for the wishes of the daring boy he was bound to abide by his decision.

"Come on, Charlie! We'll go home now," said Wild, and the scout promptly started for the door.

"Good-night!" called out Sam Spud.

"Good-night!" they answered.

They then went to their respective homes, only to meet a little later at the house Cheyenne Charlie occupied to talk over the trip to Roaring Ranch.

Roaring Ranch was the property of Young Wild West, having been purchased by him some months before.

It was quite a good paying cattle ranch, and our hero enjoyed making a trip there occasionally.

The proposed cowboy carnival made him feel very much interested, and he resolved that if the thing went through it would be the greatest of the kind ever held on a ranch in the West.

When Wild and Jim Dart entered the house of the scout they found his wife and their sweethearts, Arietta Mardock and Eloise Gardner there.

"We have heard all about it, Wild!" said Arietta, with a laugh. "Charlie has promised Anna that she can go along, so it surely follows that Eloise and I are to be in the party, too."

"All right, Et," was the reply. "I guess you can go with us this time. The trip is going to be a pleasure affair, anyhow, but of course it is necessary that the owner of a ranch should be there when the general round-up is made. How soon could you girls get ready, anyhow?"

"About as soon as you could."

"I hardly think that. Why, I am ready now, for that matter."

"Well, I think we can be ready by to-morrow morning," spoke up Anna, Charlie's wife.

"What do you think of that, boys?" Wild remarked, turning to his two partners.

"I reckon that ther sooner we get over ther better it will be," retorted the scout. "If they are goin' ter have such big goin's on over there Spofford might be mighty glad to have us there to help him, most likely."

"And we certainly would be of great help to Mrs. Spofford," spoke up Anna. "I suppose it will be what they call an 'all day feed' when the carnival takes place, and there will have to be lots of cooking done."

"Well, if you girls can really get ready to start to-morrow morning, and if Charlie and Jim are willing to the arrangement, we will go at that time, then."

Young Wild West always called them the three girls,

notwithstanding that Anna was a married woman past twenty-five.

She acted in a sort of motherly way to Arietta and Eloise when they went away from home, and they had become so used to her that they would not have thought of going away without her.

Arietta was one of the prettiest and bravest of Western girls, who had been brought up on the border in the midst of all sorts of dangers and perils.

Eloise, on the other hand, was a delicate miss who had been reared in a city, but who was gradually falling into the ways of the wild West.

When the three ladies declared that they would be ready for the journey to Roaring Ranch the next morning at seven o'clock, Young Wild West concluded that he and his partners would have to get a hustle on them and get the necessary articles together that they would have to take along on a packhorse, as they would be compelled to go into camp two nights before arriving at the ranch.

When Wild and Jim left Charlie's house they went over to their bachelor quarters, that were looked after for them by a trusted Chinaman called Wing Wah.

This man was not only a firstclass cook, but knew about the care of a simple household such as suited them.

Sometimes they took him along when they went on trip, so he could cook their meals, and Wild decided Wing Wah would go this time.

"Wing," said he, when they went in the house, found the Chinaman taking things easy and studying a picture book that was intended for small children. "I want you to get ready for a trip to Roaring Ranch. start to-morrow morning, and I want you to have the cooking utensils we will need for the trip. We will put them on a packhorse along with the tent we are going to take along for the ladies, so don't forget anything."

"Me no forgettee, Misler Wild," was the reply. "Me go to Roaring Ranch, too, so be."

"Yes, you are to go, too. We will need you to cook and wash up things on the way."

Wing Wah did not look as though he exactly liked the idea of going along.

But this was probably because he knew he would have considerable work to do if he did; whereas, if he remained at home there would be nothing for him to do but to take care of the house and get his own meals.

But he did not demur.

His wages were good, as were all that were paid out by Young Wild West and the company he was the treasurer of.

The Chinaman started right, and when they retired that night everything was in readiness to be put on the packhorse in the morning.

It was just a few minutes before seven that Young Wild West, Jim Dart and Wing Wah rode down to the

postoffice, the Chinaman leading the packhorse, which was pretty well loaded.

Cheyenne Charlie, Arietta, Anna and Eloise met them there, all being equipped for the trip over the mountains to the prairie in Wyoming.

Word had been sent to Sam Spud that they were going to start at seven that morning, and they no sooner gathered at the postoffice than the cowboy came out of the Gazoo hotel and mounted his horse.

"I see you are right on time, boss," he said to Wild, as he took off his hat and made a bow for the benefit of the girls.

"Oh, yes," was the retort. "I generally try to do as I say I will. You are all ready, I presume?"

"Me? Well, I should reckon so! All I had to do was to stock up with some tobacker and a flask of good rum."

"Well, you want to go lightly on the rum. I never allow a drunken man to stay in a party that I am at the head of."

"Oh, I only take a little drop now an' then for ther stomach's sake."

There was a smile at this retort, and then Wild introduced the man to the ladies.

Then they bade those who had gathered at the postoffice see them off a cheery good-by, and the trip was begun. As nothing of importance occurred on the way over the mountains, it is hardly necessary to describe the journey to Boaring Ranch.

They arrived there on the afternoon of the third day and received a warm welcome from Alex Spofford and his wife, the couple who ran things at the ranch.

No particular day had been set for the round-up and the carnival that was to follow, so Wild thought he would let the cowboys themselves fix the time.

The spring grass was about two inches tall, and things looked fine on the ranch property.

At the earnest request of Spofford, Wild made an inspection of everything about the buildings and cattle pens the day after their arrival, and that night he went over the books with the honest old fellow.

He found everything about as correct and in as good order as it should be, and consequently commended Spofford for it.

"The new man you have is something of a wonder, to hear him talk," our hero remarked.

"You mean ther feller who took ther letter over to you, I reckon?" and then Spofford smiled.

"Yes; I mean Sam Spud."

"Well, he has got an awful lot ter say, an' he has made himself putty solid with some of ther men. He's a fine worker, though, and is away up in fancy ridin' an' shootin'. If he wasn't such a brag I'd like him better, though, for he makes out he kin do a good deal more'n he kin."

"Yes, I easily understood that he was something of a windbag when I first saw him and heard him talk. He seems to think that he ought to be a sort of leader in

this carnival we are going to have, and I have come to the conclusion to allow him to be."

"What!" gasped the old man.

"I will let him go ahead and arrange the sporting part of it, anyhow, and let him give it out that he is master of ceremonies. I will participate in the various contests, then, on the same footing as the rest of the boys."

"Well, I reckon you know your own business, but it seems to me that if Sam Spud is told that he is to have charge he will swell up with pride until he busts."

"Oh, not so bad as that!" laughed Wild. "You can tell the cowboys that I have decided that they shall run the carnival the way they want to, and that they shall appoint me one of their number as a sort of master of ceremonies. It is quite likely that they will select Spud, and then, when he gets through with his stunts, if there is anything that Charlie, Jim or I can do that hasn't been done we'll do it. I rather think they will all like that."

"Yes, they'll all like it but Spud."

"Well, if he don't like it, I fancy that he is not the man to harbor any grudge."

"No! He ain't that kind. He's jest one of them fellers that can't help saying things that ain't so, an' tryin' to do things that he knows he can't do. If he gets taken down a couple of pegs in this here carnival business it won't hurt him a bit, Wild."

The next morning the manager of the ranch gave it out among the cowboys that Young Wild West said they were to run the carnival to suit themselves, and they should appoint one of their number as leader, to go ahead and fix up the stunts that were to be done.

As soon as he heard this Sam Spud began electioneering among the boys, and he soon got a majority of them in favor of appointing him as leader.

They had seen him perform some remarkable feats, but what he had shown them was nothing to what he could do, he declared.

It was Sunday morning when they all got together and made this decision, and it was finally decided that the carnival was to take place the day following the round-up.

When Wild heard this he gave it out that the round-up of the cattle should begin the next morning.

Some cattle buyers would be over on Wednesday, Spofford had told him, and that would give them a chance to select what they wanted.

Then the branding of those that were not big enough to sell could take place, and when this was done the Cowboy Carnival would be in order.

CHAPTER III.

A PAIR OF RASCALS.

It so happened that there were a few men employed on the ranch who did not approve of the things that were being done in regard to the proposed carnival.

There were two who especially did not like Spofford or Sam Spud.

They were among the few who had been hired the month before, and their names were Gil Logan and Benedict.

Just what the given name of the latter one was no one seemed to know—or care, for that matter.

He simply went by the name of Benedict, and that was quite sufficient.

Neither of these two had ever seen Young Wild West, and from what they had heard of him they came to a conclusion that he was an upstart of a boy, who ought to be given a good thrashing.

The stories they had heard of how he could handle the biggest kind of men with the greatest ease they regarded as bits of fiction, declaring that the reason he had things his own way was because he had plenty of money and no one wanted to incur his dislike.

When these two men—rascals would be more appropriate, for they were nothing more or less—learned that Young Wild West had given the cowboys power to select their own manager of the carnival they felt sure that Sam Spud would work his way to the front and manage to get to be the leader of the game.

And when they finally heard that this was so they got to talking it over between them, and the things that were said about Young Wild West, Aleck Spofford and Sam Spud were anything but complimentary.

"I kin see through it easy enough," said Gil Logan. "Spud has been showin' ther youngster some of his ridin' or shootin' tricks, an' has made what they calls a hero outter himself. Then the boy recommends him to sorter run things here."

"It looks that way," retorted Benedict. "But it do seem sorter funny, too, if that's ther case. I've heard some of ther boys say as how Young Wild West is ther Prince of ther Saddle an' Champion Deadshot of the West."

"That's all right. He might have given himself them titles. You don't suppose for an instant that he can ride or shoot any better than either me or you, do yer?"

"Well, no! He'd have to be a good one if he could."

"Well, do you know what I'm in favor of doin'?"

"What?"

"Givin' Spud a good thumpin'!"

"He sartinly oughter have one. He ain't got ther sense he was born with, anyhow. Why, either of us would have made better managers for this here carnival."

"Of course. Well, what do you say if we give Spud a good thumpin' between now an' ther time of ther carnival, an' then quittin' our job?"

"I'll go it."

"An' say!"

Logan forced his horse closer to the one his companion was mounted on and looked around to make sure no one was listening, as he said the words.

"What?" asked Benedict, looking interested.

"We've known each other fur quite awhile, hain't we?"

"Oh, yes."

"An' we've done most everythin' together, 'cept killin' a man?"

"I reckon we have. We've fleeced more'n one feller out of his money at playin' poker, we've raided ther gin mill over in Steuben an' never got found out, an' we've —"

"Well, never mind just what we've done. S'pose we rob ther ranch after ther cattle buyers come over an' leave a pile of money here?"

"Would we dare?" and the villain looked as though he hardly believed they would.

"Would we dare? Why wouldn't we? I'll tell you how it could be worked. You could steal ther money, an' then, after we'd got it, we could manage ter git into a row with Sam Spud an' old Spofford. One word would bring on another, an' we could up an' leave an' strike out with ther money afore they thought of lookin' for it."

"By jingo, you're all right!"

"That's what I think myself."

They talked over the matter as they rode over the range, and did not drop it until they came upon some of the cowboys who were hunting up straggling cattle.

The ones they struck were old hands, and they were warm admirers of Young Wild West, so there was no in the villains broaching the subject to them.

Late that afternoon, which was Sunday, the two were returning to their quarters when they saw three ladies on horseback coming toward them.

The ladies were Arietta, Anna and Eloise.

"Ha!" exclaimed Logan. "There's ther wimmen what come over with Young Wild West, I reckon."

"I s'pose so," replied Benedict. "I wonder what kind of lookers they are?"

"Well, we'll soon see. I heard ther boys say they got here ther day afore yesterday. I wonder what kind of a lookin' fellow Young Wild West is, anyway? I've never met him."

"I don't know; but they say he's a dandified looking boy."

"An' Cheyenne Charlie an' Jim Dart—they say as how they're fine lookin' fellows, too."

"Oh! Well, some people say a whole lot, jest 'cause they've got an idea that they're somethin' great. Well, it's quite sartin that them three gals comin' there are ther ones we heard ther fellows talkin' about this mornin'. My! But that one with ther reddish hair knows how to handle a horse, all right. Jest look at her."

"Ther other two ride sorter easy like, too," was the reply. "There! I reckon they're goin' to turn around an' ride back to ther house. Let's ride ahead an' overtake 'em an' see what they look like."

"All right."

The two rascals had been away on the cattle range for three days; and they were really anxious to get back to their quarters.

But just now they were more anxious to get a look at

the girls, for cowboys always have eyes for females, since they see so few of them.

They let their bronchos go at full speed, and soon overtook Arietta and her two companions.

As the sun was almost setting Logan thought it would be proper to say good-evening in saluting them, so he took off his hat and did so.

"Good-evening," replied the girls.

"You're strangers aroun' here, I reckon?" ventured Benedict.

"Not exactly," replied Arietta. "We have been here two or three times before. Do you belong to Roaring Ranch?"

"Yes'm; we work for Mr. Spofford."

"Well, we are stopping at his house."

"You come over with Young Wild West, I reckon?" said Logan.

"Yes," and then Arietta urged her horse forward a little faster, as though to get out of the company of the men.

"What's your hurry, miss?" called out Benedict. "We ain't goin' ter hurt yer."

"Hurt us!" echoed Wild's sweetheart, turning around sharply. "I didn't suppose you were going to hurt us."

"Well, what was you ridin' off so sudden like then, miss?"

"Can't we ride alongside yer?" spoke up Logan.

"No! We are not in need of an escort just now."

"Oh!"

Then both villains laughed and looked at each other.

Arietta and her companions did not like this.

They thought the cowboys were getting too insulting.

But they said nothing further just then, and attempted to ride away from them.

At this Logan and Benedict became bolder and rode up until one of them was on either side of Arietta.

Then the girl resented their actions.

"You two men just ride on about your own business," she said. "We do not want you to escort us back to the house."

"Why, we ain't goin' ter touch you, miss!" declared Logan, and then he ogled her and laughed aloud.

"I know you are not going to touch me. Now move on, or you will tumble from your horses so quickly that it will be hard to tell which of you strikes the ground first."

The girl had drawn her revolver as quick as a flash, and she was waving it from one to the other, her finger on the trigger, ready to discharge it.

That altered the situation wonderfully.

The two villains promptly reined in their horses and allowed the three to go ahead.

"I hope you ain't offended," called out Benedict. "We didn't mean anythin' wrong by ther way we acted. All cowboys like to see putty gals, you know, an' we only wanted to ride erlong with you so's we could tell ther rest of ther gang that we'd seen about ther prettiest three wimmen that wears dresses—that's all we done it fur."

"Well, you just mind your own business and keep away

from us. That's all I've got to say. If you don't you won't have time to wish you had."

Logan and Benedict turned off in a different direction and made a short cut for the big barn on the ranch, while the girls proceeded on at an easy gait.

"They were evil looking fellows, and I believe if you had not stopped them they would have gone further," said Eloise.

"I took a dislike to them the minute they rode up," declared Arietta. "I made up my mind what to do if they got too fast."

"Are you going to tell Wild about it?" asked Anna.

"Well, I suppose if I do they will get discharged. Wild always gets angry in cases of this kind."

"Well, if I were you I would say nothing about it just now. It is more than likely that they have learned a lesson and that they will behave themselves in the future."

"I will do as you say, I guess. But if I ever set eyes on those two men again I will keep a sharp watch on them, for I don't like their appearance."

"They look like regular villains," added Eloise.

"Well, they may be perfectly honest after all," said Anna. "They probably were smitten with the good looks of you two girls, and in their admiration overstepped the bounds of propriety."

"Well, if they had kept on they would have overstepped the bounds of this green earth!" Arietta assured her. "If one of them had so much as dared to lay a hand on me I would have shot him dead in his tracks."

They reached the house a few minutes later and found supper ready and waiting for them.

Meanwhile let us follow Gil Logan and Benedict.

They felt just a trifle ashamed over what had occurred, and they both expected that they would get into trouble.

"We was a little too hasty," said Benedict. "We should not have stuck to 'em after they said they didn't want us to ride along with 'em."

"Well, I couldn't help myself," retorted Logan. "My! But ther gal with ther reddish hair is a regular spitfire, ain't she? She's jest as pretty as a picter, too. If I thought I was in need of a wife she'd be ther one I'd want."

"I like ther other gal ther best. She was so innocent an' frightened like. Why, she's got ther puttiest dark eyes I ever seen. She'd be ther one fur me, if I had a choice an' was goin' to start travelin' in double harness."

"Ther oldest one ain't such a bad looker, either," mused Logan, half aloud. "Jove! I thought she was goin' ter pull a shooter, too; an' I guess she was, fur I seen her hand slide toward her bosom mighty quick."

"Well, let 'em drop. If they tell about it, an' anyone says anythin' to us about it we'll have to apologize, that's all. We don't wanter quit Roarin' Ranch till we gits hold of ther money you was talkin' about, you know."

"That's so; well, let it go at that, then. But somehow I can't help thinkin' about them gals. They made me think

more about gittin' married than I've thought in a couple of years."

"Shet up about it! Here we are at ther stable!"

The two cowboys dismounted, and putting their horses away, went over to their quarters and joined some thirty of their fellowworkers, who were just eating their supper.

The crowd was a jolly one, and they soon joined in the talk and became interested in what was going on.

The cowboys were very much interested in the carnival that was going to take place as soon as the rounding-up of the cattle was done, and much speculation was had over the good time they anticipated.

Every man of them knew Young Wild West save Logan and Benedict, and shortly after supper was over, when some one announced that the young owner of the ranch was coming over to their quarters to see them, the two villains became suddenly uneasy.

They thought it might be that Young Wild West was looking for them to make them apologize for insulting the ladies.

The next minute our hero entered the big shack that the men ate in, and when he did so a cheer went up from the cowboys.

"Humph!" grunted Logan to Benedict. "Why, he's even more of a boy than I thought he was. I reckon we needn't be much afraid of him."

CHAPTER IV.

THE STAMPEDE OF THE CATTLE.

Behind our hero came his two partners and Aleck Spofford.

"Boys," said the latter, when the cheering had subsided, "Mr. West says we had better start in to-morrow to round-up the cattle, so you will know what to do. We will get them down here in the big pen, so the buyers who are coming here Wednesday will be able to pick out what they want. Then the young steers that haven't got their growth must be branded, and after that the Cowboy Carnival will begin. Mr. West has arranged to have plenty of good things to eat on that day, so there's no reason that you won't have a good time of it."

"Three cheers for Young Wild West!" shouted one of the cowboys, and then they fairly made the rafters shake with their yells.

Sam Spud was probably the happiest man in the crowd.

He strutted about like a prize game cock, and as he had shaved himself and tied a flaming red bow at the neck of his gray flannel shirt, he put on quite a dandified appearance.

Wild made a little speech to them, in which he thanked them for rendering such good services on the ranch, and he wound up by telling them that he gave his hearty approval to the carnival idea.

"As you have already been told," he said, "I thought it wise to let you select a man from yourselves to act in the capacity of master of ceremonies. I have heard that you have chosen Mr. Sam Spud, who came over to Weston to notify me of the carnival. From what Mr. Spud says, he must be quite able to fill the bill, and I hope that you will have no cause to complain of your selection. Of course myself and partners will join in the sport. You who know us are aware that we could hardly refrain from doing it, since we are so familiar with the saddle. I have decided to put up some cash prizes for those who excel in feats of horsemanship and shooting, and at the close of the carnival I am going to call for a vote and find out who is the most popular cowboy at Roaring Ranch. As soon as the question is settled the lucky man will receive a gold watch and chain from me. That is about all I have to say on the subject, so go ahead and arrange the carnival to suit yourselves."

Another cheer greeted these remarks, and some of the more enthusiastic ones picked up the boy and insisted on carrying him around the shack on their shoulders.

Gil Logan and Benedict had listened attentively to all that had been said, and they assured each other that it did not amount to a great deal.

A little later Spofford called them over.

"Wild," said he to the young ranch owner, "I recollect you've never seen these fellers afore. They're two of the new ones I hired about a month ago. They're pretty good workers, too, and I guess they like their jobs."

"Oh, yes!" spoke up Logan. "We never worked in a better place than Roaring Ranch."

"That's right," added Benedict. "We are well satisfied."

"I am glad of that," retorted Wild. "I want every man who works for me to be satisfied."

He looked at the pair rather keenly, and when both winced under his gaze he made up his mind that they were not exactly what they ought to be.

The next morning the rounding-up began.

Some of the cowboys had to go out miles on the prairie and drive the cattle in, so it was no easy task; nor would it be done in a day.

Arietta got our hero's consent to allow her and Anna and Eloise to participate, so about nine o'clock they set out with their three escorts.

Each of the girls carried a lariat, like the cowboys, and they anticipated no little pleasure and excitement.

Wild had been told by Spofford the direction the furthestmost herd was in, so he concluded to ride off that way and assist in getting them in.

It was nearly noon when they came in sight of a herd.

There was easily twelve hundred cattle in it, and as they had been out on the open prairie ever since the grass had begun to sprout they were a pretty wild lot.

But the cowboys knew their business, and they were working them in gradually.

"That is what I call a pretty sight," said Jim Dart,

as he brought his horse to a halt and pointed to the advancing cattle. "Just think, Eloise, of the tons of beef that are there!"

"It seems like a shame to kill the innocent creatures, doesn't it?" asked Eloise, turning to Arietta and Anna.

"Innocent creatures, eh?" laughed Jim. "You would not think they were so innocent looking if you saw a stampede. Just suppose that herd was to take a notion to come tearing toward us like the wind now! Then I guess you would change your mind about their innocence."

The words were scarcely out of the boy's mouth when there was a sort of flurry among the cattle in the rear, and the next instant a bellowing roar came to their ears.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "Something has started them! Here they come! We must get out of the way!"

The leaders of the herd spread out like a fan almost instantly, and they were now rushing forward to get out of the way of those that were now pressing them from the rear.

They were less than two hundred yards away, too, and our friends soon saw that they were outdistancing the cowboys who had been riding along on either side of the herd.

"We've got to turn tail, too, I reckon," remarked Cheyenne Charlie, as he cast a swift look around and saw that everything was clear ahead of them.

"Oh, look at them!" cried Eloise, turning pale with fright. "They seem to have all gone raving mad in an instant."

This was indeed the case.

Young Wild West had witnessed the starting of more than one stampede, but he had never seen anything done so quickly as this before.

"I will investigate this and try and find the cause," he said. "The whole thing started from the rear."

They had turned their horses around, and were now riding away with the speed of the wind.

But as fast as they were going, the herd of frightened cattle was gaining upon them.

Wild had struck off at an angle, going to the right in the hope of getting clear of the cattle.

But he soon realized that he could not do it.

They had lost considerable ground by the move, and the only thing to do now was to strike right ahead, and then, when they found they were holding up their own, to make a slight turn to the right or left.

The maddened cattle were less than a hundred yards off now, and they were coming like a streak of wildfire.

Suddenly Anna's horse stumbled and fell to the ground, throwing her over its head.

A cry of horror went up from Eloise, for the girl surely thought that it was all up with the wife of Cheyenne Charlie.

"Halt!" cried Young Wild West, in a ringing tone.

"There is only one thing for us to do, boys! We must split the herd!"

The words had scarcely left his mouth when his rifle flew to his shoulder.

Crack!

As the weapon spoke one of the foremost steers in the center of the advancing line fell.

Crack! Crack, crack, crack!

Charlie and Jim joined in the firing, and the cattle dropped and caused those behind them to tumble and form a heap until the herd was split into two wings.

Our friends remained grouped together as closely as they could get, and the next instant the frightened steers went whirling past them on either side.

They all passed without touching them, though they were dangerously close.

Arietta had dismounted the moment Wild had begun firing, and she seized Anna's horse by the head and held it down, to keep it from getting killed in the rush.

Though the girl had never experienced anything of the kind before, she had heard of such things happening, and she was bound to do all she could to help Wild and his partners.

The action of the brave girl had surely saved the life of the horse, and it was not until the danger was over that she got up from its head and let the animal up.

Anna, who was more frightened than hurt, seized Arietta and gave her a hug.

"You knew just what to do!" she cried. "Oh, it was awful! I thought I was surely gone that time."

"An' I thought so myself!" remarked her husband. "If it hadn't been for Wild I would never have thought of splittin' ther herd. But I'd have died with you, Anna; you kin bet on that."

The scout's face was rather pale, and all those present knew he meant what he said.

"There is always a way to get out of danger if you can only think of it in time," remarked our hero, as he looked at the heap of dead and dying cattle. "It was the only way to save Anna, and I knew it."

"But look at the risk you all took," said the woman, trembling in her husband's arms.

"There was not so much risk about it. All we had to do was to drop some of the cattle in a bunch. Those coming behind them did the rest. It's easy when you come to think of it."

"But look at the cattle you have lost."

"Well, I guess I would have much rather lost the entire herd than to have lost you."

Our hero smiled when he said this.

Then he turned his gaze to two cowboys who had been following the herd.

He saw that they were the two strangers who had been introduced to him by Spofford the night before.

It occurred to him instantly that they were responsible for the stampede of the cattle, whether innocently or purposely.

The two men halted by the heap of cattle.

Wild walked over to them.

"What caused the cattle to start off like that?" he asked, looking keenly at the villains.

"How do we know, boss?" retorted Logan, affecting surprise.

"I don't know how you know, but I know you do know!"

"You ain't goin' to accuse us of——"

"See here!" exclaimed the boy, with flashing eyes. "I guess I can read you two fellows all right. Your looks and actions give you away, if I wasn't sure that you knew what the trouble was. You were driving the herd from behind, and now you say that you don't know what started the cattle to stampede. I saw where the trouble started, and you know what made it start. Now tell me all about it, or I'll know the reason why."

"You may be the owner of this ranch, but you can't talk to me that way!" exclaimed Logan, drawing his revolver. "I reckon I ain't ther one as will take that kind of talk."

"Oh, I guess you will take any kind of talk I choose to give you," and the villain saw the muzzle of a revolver staring him right in the face.

As he had not yet raised his shooter he found himself in a rather peculiar fix.

Benedict, however, tried to come to his friend's assistance.

He placed his hand on the butt of his shooter.

Then Young Wild West's left hand flew out on a line, and Benedict saw that he was covered with a revolver, too.

"Just let go your shooters and hold up your hands, gentlemen! I asked you a question a few minutes ago, and I am going to have it answered, or I will riddle you two rascals with bullets!"

Up went the hands of the villainous pair.

Young Wild West was altogether too persuasive for them.

They now fully realized that those who had told them about Young Wild West's wonderful nerve and quick ways had not exaggerated, as they thought.

"How did you cause the herd to stampede?"

The question was asked in a stern tone of voice.

"We pricked two or three of 'em with a knife, jest ter git 'em goin'," spoke up Benedict.

"You saw us coming before you did it, though, didn't you?"

"No!"

"What!"

"We didn't see you—honest!" they both declared.

Wild was satisfied that they had done the thing for some purpose, but he could not think what it was.

After a minute of thought he turned to the men and said:

"You ride over to the ranch and tell Spofford to pay you what is coming to you. Then you want to light out as quick as your cayuses will carry you and if you are

ever caught around here by me again you will be riddled with bullets! Move, now!"

The two cowboys rode off as meek as lambs.

"I knew those two fellows were no good the instant I set eyes on them last night," our hero said to his companions.

"They are the two who insulted us last evening," remarked Arietta.

"What! Insulted you, Et? If I had known that I would have given them something to remember as long as they live!"

CHAPTER V.

WHAT TOOK PLACE AT STEUBEN.

Logan and Benedict made haste to get to the house and get their money from Spofford.

They had seen just enough of Young Wild West to realize that he was a dangerous person to fool with.

"I told yer it was foolishness ter start ther cattle on a stampede," said Benedict, as they rode along.

"Well, I jest done it ter give Young Wild West a ther rest a scare. I wanted to see how fast they could skeedaddle, that's all," replied Logan.

"Well, you seen how it turned out now, didn't you?"

"Yes. I wonder what made 'em split ther herd shootin' into it? They had chance enough to get a without doin' that."

"We don't know about that. We was over half a back, an' a feller can't see very close at that distance. If they could have got away you kin bet that they would have fired into the herd, for they've lost more'n fifty catt by doin' that."

"An' we've lost our jobs," added Logan.

"All on account of your foolishness, too," declared Benedict. "Now, how are we goin' ter rob ther ranch? An' how are we goin' ter see ther carnival? Young Wild West said that if he caught us on this land ag'in after we left it we would get filled full of lead. I believe he meant it, too. Gracious! What a nervy an' quick young feller he is! I never stacked up ag'in anyone like him afore!"

"He turned out to be jest what some of the boys said he was, that's all. But maybe we ain't through with him yet. He's discharged us, but that don't put an end to us any more than it does to him. We're livin' yet, an' there's no tellin' what we kin do till we try."

"Well, I s'pose that's so."

They rode on, and presently reached a place from where they could sight the ranch house.

The stampeded cattle had rushed off to the north and were miles behind the two.

The rascally cowboys soon intercepted the foreman of the ranch.

"We're done, an' we want our money, Spofford," said Benedict.

"You ain't goin' ter leave until after ther cattle are rounded up, are you?" asked Spofford, in surprise.

"I reckon we can't do no different," answered Logan. "Young Wild West told us ter come to you an' git our money, an' then ter light off ther place as fast as we could."

"Oh, he did, hey? Well, come on over to ther house, then. Wild knows jest what he's doin', I reckon."

"Maybe he did, an' then maybe he didn't," retorted Logan.

"What did he discharge you for?" questioned the foreman.

"Oh, ther big herd we was after got ther Old Boy in 'em an' started off ter rush things a bit, an' Young Wild West an' his gang come mighty near gittin' under 'em. Then he stops us two an' says as how that we done it."

"Well, if he said so, you kin bet that he knowed jest what he was talkin' about."

The two villains said nothing to this.

They thought they had said about enough.

Though they had no use for Spofford, they wanted to get their money from him and then get off the place.

Just how long they would remain off it they did not know.

When they reached the house the foreman quickly gave them their wages.

"Now," said he, looking squarely at them, "whatever Young Wild West told you you had better be careful to remember. If you don't remember it, an' run across him again, you'll surely git it!"

"Oh, I guess he won't hurt us much—not if we see him again," answered Benedict.

A couple of minutes later they rode off in the direction of the nearest settlement, which was called Steuben.

The population of the place did not number more than fifty or sixty, but there was a supply store, a blacksmith shop and a couple of places where liquor was sold.

All of these did a thriving business, since they had several ranches to draw from.

Steuben was only about seven miles from the Roaring Ranch house, so Logan and Benedict were not long in riding there.

One of the places where liquor was sold was termed a respectable one, and the other not quite that way.

As might be supposed, the two rascals headed for the latter place.

It was here that the rough element of the cowboys generally congregated to gamble away their earnings, and if a man was shot in a quarrel now and then there was not much thought of it.

When Logan and Benedict dismounted and entered the place they found a dashing looking man in a velvet suit standing at the bar with something like a dozen men gathered around him.

That he was spending his money quite freely they could easily tell by the happy expressions on the faces of the loungers.

"Just in time, my friends!" the man called out, as the two cowboys walked in. "I am a stranger in this town, but I want to get acquainted with everybody. Just order what you want, and I'll pay the bill."

Logan and Benedict promptly fell in line and drank with the crowd.

They admired the easy-going way of the stranger, and as he was free-hearted they made up their minds that he was all right.

But they were like the majority of cowboys, who, when they have money usually want to spend it.

They each stood treat, and then the man in the velvet suit did it once more.

The crowd was beginning to get under the influence of the stuff, and some of them began to sing and dance about the room.

It was just at this stage of the game that a Chinaman entered.

It was Wing Wah, Young Wild West's cook.

The celestial was in the habit of taking whisky now and then, and as he had been unable to obtain any at the ranch, he had mounted his horse and rode over to Steuben.

Though Wing Wah had all the peculiar ways and opinions of his race, he had learned a great deal about the Melican man's mode of doing business since he had been in the employ of our hero.

He had learned how to shoot pretty good, too, and every time he got a little too much stimulant into his system he tried to imitate the dashing style of his employer.

Wing was very, very thirsty when he stepped into the saloon.

But the instant the hilarious men caught sight of him they went for him.

One of them caught him by the neck and began whirling him around like a tetotum.

"High Low!" cried the Chinaman. "Let Chinaman be. He no likee foollee."

"Dance, you almond-eyed heathen, dance!" the fellow roared who had hold of him.

But Wing didn't want to dance just then.

He wanted a drink.

He waited till he got a good chance and then pulled himself away from the clutch of the fellow.

"Let Chinaman be," he said, as he ran around the end of the bar. "Me come in to gittee drink, allee samee Melican man."

"Hold on, boys!" spoke up the man who had charge of the place. "I've seen ther Chinees afore. He's Young Wild West's Chinees. Jest let him alone, won't yer?"

"He's Young Wild West's Chinaman, is he?" exclaimed Benedict. "Well, if he don't amount to no more than his boss does he's putty nigh worthless, that's all I've got to say."

"Well, I reckon you wouldn't say that, not if Young Wild West was in hearin' of your voice," declared the saloonkeeper. "I ain't got any particular feelin's for Young Wild West, but I know that he amounts to a whole

lot, an' there's no use in sayin' he don't. He jest amounts ter ernuff to clean this here place out, if he took a notion to do it, an' don't you forgot it, either."

The dancing and singing had come to an abrupt stop the instant the Mongolian broke loose from the man, and they all listened to what was said by the proprietor and Benedict.

Wing Wah put his money on the counter and asked for what he wanted, and it was promptly given to him.

He bought a drink and then had a bottle filled.

It was not until he started to go out that any one interfered with him again.

Then Benedict pulled out his revolver and sent a bullet in the floor about a foot from the Chinaman's feet.

"Dance, you heathen!" he cried. "Let's see what you are made of!"

"Me allee samee likee Young Wild West!" was the quick reply, and out came a big revolver which covered the man in a twinkling. "Drop pistol! So be!"

A loud guffaw went up as Benedict obeyed.

He had his finger on the trigger of his shooter, but he dared not raise it because the Chinaman had him covered.

Logan would have taken a hand in it then if the proprietor had not interfered.

"Hold on, now!" he exclaimed. "Fun is fun, but I advise you to let the Chineesee alone. He's jest as apt ter kill some of yer, as you're apt ter kill him. Jest let him alone."

"That's right, boys," spoke up the man in the velvet suit. "He says that he is just the same as Young Wild West, so let him be. I don't know who Young Wild West is, but from what I've heard right here he must be something out of the ordinary run of fellows. He must be a regular terror!"

"Young Wild West come here pullee soonee; he make no foolee," remarked Wing Wah, smiling blandly.

Then he started for the door, and no one stopped him as he went out.

The man in the velvet suit appeared to be much interested in what had just transpired.

"What is your name?" he asked of Benedict.

The cowboy quickly told him, and then introduced Logan.

"You seem to be likely sort of fellows," resumed the stranger. "You belong around here, I suppose?"

"Well, we've been workin' on a ranch a few miles from here," answered Logan, "but we jest got discharged this mornin'."

"Ah! Is that so? What ranch did you work on?"

"Roarin' Ranch, which is owned by ther young feller they was jest talking about—Young Wild West."

"Oh, is that so? What did you get discharged for, if I may ask? I supposed that they would be very busy over there rounding up the cattle. I should think they would be putting on men, instead of discharging them."

"Well, ther boss himself discharged us, 'cause he accused us of stampedin' a herd of cattle what nearly run over him an' ther other two fellers an' ther three gals what was with him."

"Is that so?" and the stranger looked surprised.

"Yes, an' that's ther whole sum an' substance of it," answered Benedict.

"He didn't make any bones about tellin' us to git our money, either," spoke up Logan. "He sorter has a way of makin' a feller git a hustle on him when he says ter do it. But I jest reckon I'll git square on him ther first time I git ther chance."

"And so will I!" added his friend.

"I don't blame you fellows, if you have a grievance against him," said the stranger. "You say that this Young Wild West owns Roaring Ranch? I thought a man named Spofford owned it."

"No; he's only ther boss of it. Young Wild West's ther owner. He comes over once in awhile ter look around, an' when he does come they generally have a big time. As soon as they git ther cattle rounded up this week they're goin' ter have what they call a Cowboy Carnival over there, an' I reckon there'll be a hot tin of it. We was sorter figurin' on takin' part in ther sport, but we won't hardly dare go there now."

The man in velvet looked surprised when Logan told him this.

"Won't dare go there?" he echoed. "Why? Is it ing to be a strictly private affair?"

"Oh, that ain't it!" spoke up Benedict. "I reckon one can go over to ther carnival if they want to. Young Wild West told us two fellers that if we show up on ther ranch ag'in we'd git shot full of lead. That's what's botherin' us."

"Oh, I see! Well, I'll guarantee if he told me any thing like that I'd go there jest ter see if he would keep his word!"

"They say he's one of ther kind that does always keep his word," Logan hastened to say.

"See here!" and the man put on a look of importance. "Don't you fellows know that it takes two to make a shootin' match of that kind? Now, if I went over there knowin' that Young Wild West was going to fill me with lead, if he could, do you suppose I would let him? No! I would get in the first shot, and after that I hardly think he would be very dangerous."

"Who are you, anyhow, mister?" questioned Benedict.

"Me? Oh, I'm Fred Jacklyn, from Cheyenne City. I've come up here to Steuben to buy all the cattle they've got to sell at Roaring Ranch, if I can get them at my price. I am going over to Roaring Ranch as soon as I am notified that the cattle are ready for inspection, and I guess you can go with me, if you want to."

"We'd jest like ter go, if you kin fix it," said Benedict.

"I'll fix it! Never fear!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN IN VELVET MAKES A MISTAKE.

Young Wild West was not a little angered when he heard how Logan and Benedict had insisted on forcing their presence on the girls the day before.

"You did right, Et!" he said to his sweetheart. "I guess they found they had tackled the wrong person when they tackled you."

"Oh, I wasn't the least bit afraid of them!" the girl declared. "Neither was Anna nor Eloise. Anna was just going to draw her revolver when they concluded they would quit."

"And I would have shot, too," said Eloise. "I have learned considerable from Arietta, and I am going to take care of myself when anything like that happens."

"Good for you, Eloise!" exclaimed Jim. "That's the way to talk! There's no use in being scared so easy, is there? You just do as Arietta does, and you will come out all right every time."

Anna had little to say on the subject.

She had hardly recovered from her fright at being thrown from her horse right in the face of the rushing herd.

Wild knew they would gradually come down to a slower pace and then come to a stop.

But then the greatest of tact and skill would have to be used to get them together again and move them down to the cattle pen.

About an hour later the herd had scattered over the prairie and stopped its maddened rush.

Then our friends rode up they found several of the cowboys working hard to get them together.

Young Wild West at once started in to help them.

Charlie and Jim did likewise, as might be supposed.

And then Arietta and Anna and Eloise took a hand in the exciting sport.

It was night before the herd was into anything like shape, and then, leaving the cowboys to drive the cattle in, our friends rode back to the house.

The ladies were pretty well tired out from the sport and were quite glad to sit down to the fine supper that Mrs. Spofford had prepared for them.

The next day the work of the rounding-up continued, and when night came it was pretty well done.

About twenty of the men were sent out after the stragglers the third morning, and when they were brought in the work would be completed, so far as that part of it went.

Wednesday at noon the round-up had been completed.

It was just after they had eaten their dinner that a stranger rode up to the ranch and said that he had come to buy cattle.

He was attired in a velvet suit, and was quite a good looking man.

As the reader no doubt judges, it was Fred Jacklyn, the

man who had made friends with the two discharged villains.

But he had not only made friends with them. He had brought them to Roaring Ranch with him, after first disguising them by putting false beards on them and making them change their costumes so that they would appear like cattlemen.

Logan and Benedict had come over with him, and they sat on their horses out near the cattle pen, while Jacklyn went to the house to talk business.

Wild let Spofford do the whole thing, as he was used to the details of the business.

But Spofford had his regular customers, and the moment he set eyes on the man in velvet he knew he was a stranger to the place.

"I've come up from Cheyenne to do business with you," said Jacklyn, as Spofford offered him a chair. "I will buy all the steers you have for sale and pay you a fair price for them."

"Well, that sounds like business," retorted the manager of the ranch. "You'd better come over an' look at 'em."

"How many head have you for sale just now?" asked Jacklyn, as he left the house, followed by Wild and his two partners.

Spofford told him the number.

"Ah! Now the price. That is the main thing. I have an idea that the cattle are firstclass, but the price is the main thing after all."

The price was given him, but Jacklyn smiled and shook his head.

"You will have to do better than that," he said. "I am willing to take the whole lot, but I expect to get a better price than that."

"Well, I couldn't give you a better price than that," Spofford retorted. "I expect to get that price from the regular customers we have."

"Let me see. Are you the owner of the cattle?"

"No, I ain't ther owner. There he is there," and the manager pointed to Wild.

"Ah! Well, I have been talking to the wrong man, then. No wonder I couldn't strike a bargain with you."

"He is the man to talk to," answered our hero. "It is all left to Spofford. I have nothing to do with making the deals."

"And yet you are the owner of the ranch?" and Jacklyn arched his brows.

"Yes, I am the owner of the ranch, fast enough. But I hire a man who runs it for me. There is the man."

The man in velvet now called for his two companions to ride over.

"I brought two of my men along," he said, "to help me judge the cattle."

Our friends paid no particular attention to the two men, and so they did not recognize them in their disguises.

The place where the cattle were corralled was a big one, and it was about half a mile distant from the house.

While they were talking as they made their way to it Jim Dart happened to turn around, and as he did so he saw the girls were just in the act of mounting their horses.

"They must be coming to see the sale made," he thought. "Well, I suppose it is a new thing for them to see so many cattle sold at one time."

Before they got to the pen Arietta and her companions rode past them.

Fred Jacklyn gave a start when he saw the beauty and grace of the fair equestrians.

"That is a deuced fine looking girl—that one with the blond hair," he said to Wild. "Does she live here at Roaring Ranch?"

"She is stopping here just now," our hero replied.

"Any relation to you?" the villain went on.

"No."

"Ah! I thought perhaps she was your sister."

Charlie and Jim both knew well enough that Wild did not like this sort of talk, and they expected to see something happen when they got to the cattle pen, if the girls stopped there.

And sure enough, they did stop there.

When they got within a hundred yards of it Jacklyn touched his horse with the whip and rode over at a sharp canter.

He did not halt until he was right up with the girls, and then he took off his hat, saying:

"A lovely day, is it not?"

"Very," answered Anna.

"I hardly expected to see so much female loveliness down here at Roaring Ranch when I came to look at the cattle," he went on, doing his best to get up a flirtation.

"Perhaps you are one of the kind who often finds things you do not expect to find," spoke up Arietta.

"No, I can't say that I am. I live at Cheyenne, and I must say that we have some beautiful ladies down there. But still I never saw any that could come up to you."

"Well, sir, you might mean that as a compliment, but let me tell you that I do not appreciate that kind of talk from a total stranger. If you came to Roaring Ranch to buy cattle I advise you to do it, and not bother with anything else."

"Oh, I see! You think I have no right to talk with you without an introduction. Well, I will ask Young Wild West to introduce me," and turning, he rode back and met our hero and the rest.

His face was all smiles as he called out:

"Mr. West, I must ask you to introduce me to the ladies. You see, I am a great admirer of the fair sex, and it appears that the golden-haired girl does not exactly like it because I spoke to her without first being introduced to her."

"Did she say so?" asked Wild.

"Why, certainly she did."

"You are sure of that?"

"Positive of it!"

"See here, sir! I believe you are telling a lie. I know the young lady too well to believe that she said she did not care to converse with you till she had an introduction to you. I will bet you a hundred dollars that she never said anything of the kind."

The face of the man in velvet flushed, but he controlled himself by an effort.

"You are using pretty severe language when you say that I lie," he said.

"Oh, I am never afraid to tell a man he lies when I know he does," was the quick reply.

"Well, let me tell you that if you were a little older I would take you to task for talking to me that way."

"Oh, don't mind my age! If you want to take me to task go ahead and do it. If you don't want to, say no more about it."

"If I were not on your property I believe I would feel like filling you full of holes."

"Don't worry about the property. If you think it will make any difference with your feelings we will go over on the trail which belongs to the territory, then we will be on equal footing."

As Young Wild West said this Fred Jacklyn could control himself no longer.

He cast a quick look around, and saw that Lee and Benedict were watching intently.

Then he whipped out his revolver.

As he threw it up to fire a sharp report rang out, the weapon fell from his hand.

Young Wild West had been too quick for him, and had shot the revolver out of his hand by grazing the knuckle of his forefinger with a bullet.

Neither of his two companions made a move to draw their shooters, for they saw that Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were watching them closely.

"What is the trouble, Wild?" asked Arietta, riding up.

"Oh, this fellow said you told him that you did not care to talk to him until you had been introduced to him, and he did not appear to like it. He was going to shoot me, but I wouldn't let him."

The face of Jacklyn was now livid with rage.

With the blood dripping from his finger he sat in the saddle like a statue for the space of a minute.

"We shall meet again, Young Wild West! I came down here to buy cattle, but I would not buy any from Roaring Ranch now if you were to offer to let me have them for half price!"

"Don't worry yourself on that score," was the reply.

"You were told the price we asked, and you could not have them for any less. As to meeting you again, you had better look out if we do. The next time I will probably take your heart for a target instead of your finger."

"I am not afraid to meet any man living, let alone a mere boy."

"All right. Suppose we have it out right here, then? I'll hand you your revolver."

Wild stepped over and picked up the weapon with his left hand and tossed it to the man.

But he made not the least effort to catch it, and it fell to the ground again.

"You haven't as much sand in you as you would like to make it appear," observed our hero with a laugh. "I have met just such fellows as you before. You know when you are well off."

Jacklyn did not deign to make reply, but tightening the rein, he spoke to his horse and galloped off, followed by the two disguised villains.

"That's what I calls short and sweet," observed Cheyenne Charlie, with a grin. "What did he say to you, Anna?"

"Oh, he made some flattering remarks to Arietta, and she advised him that if he had come to Roaring Ranch to buy cattle he had better go and do it," was the reply.

"I never hinted at such a thing as that I wanted an introduction," added Arietta. "The fellow is nothing more than a smooth-tongued, insulting scoundrel."

"Well, he got all he was looking for, I guess," observed Wild, smiling grimly.

"I don't believe he wanted to buy any cattle very bad," said Spofford, as he turned to walk back to the house.

Just as they reached the stoop Arietta came galloping up.

"Wild," said she, "we would like to go over to the store for a few little things. Won't you and Char- and Jim come with us?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

A few minutes later the party of six were on their way to Steuben.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR FRIENDS GO TO STEUBEN.

It had been decided that morning that the Cowboy Carnival would take place on Saturday, thus giving the men an opportunity to get the branding of the cattle completed, and leaving them but little to do until the unsold cattle were turned out on the range the middle of the week.

Anna and the girls had been making preparations to help Mrs. Spofford along with the cooking, and as there were a few little nick-nacks needed from the store, they thought they would ride over and get them.

It was nothing more than natural that they should want the husband and two lovers to go along, and as they rode away at a canter there was much merry-making, and the incident of but a few minutes before was soon forgotten.

Half way to the village they met a couple of elderly men riding over, and guessed they were the buyers Spofford was waiting for.

But Wild knew he could depend on Spofford thoroughly, so there was no need of their going back.

The men spoke to them in the breezy style of the West and passed on their way, showing that there was nothing insulting about them.

"They are different from the other cattle buyer," observed Eloise. "You can generally tell what a man is by his looks, I think."

"So do I," retorted Anna.

"I can, anyway," spoke up Arietta. "I knew that man was one of the insulting kind the instant I saw him ride up to us."

"We might meet him when we get to Steuben," remarked the scout, looking at Wild.

"Well, if we do he had better mind his eye," was the calm rejoinder.

They soon reached the little town and rode right up to the store and dismounted.

The girls went inside, and their escorts took a walk over to the hotel that was right close by.

Not that they wanted anything particularly, but just because it was the natural thing to do.

Before they got to the door of the place they heard a shrill, discordant voice singing, and then came the clatter of a pair of wooden shoes.

"It's a Chinee tryin' to sing an' dance, I reckon," observed the scout.

"Yes, and it's our Chinaman, too," observed Jim. "I recognize his voice."

Wild nodded.

"I suppose he wanted whisky," he said. "Well, let's see what is going on in there, anyhow?"

He stepped up and opened the door of the place and walked in, followed by his two partners.

Around the sides of the room and leaning against the bar were about a dozen cowboys and cattlemen, while in the center was Wing Wah, doing his best to execute a song and dance he had heard somewhere.

It certainly was a laughable scene, since the Celestial could neither sing nor dance, and the spectators were enjoying it immensely.

So deeply engaged was he in trying to give satisfaction, Wing Wah failed to take note of the new arrivals.

"Hoopee, hoopee! Singee, dancee! Me bully bloy with a crockery eye!" he shouted, and then he brought his wooden shoes to the floor with force enough to make his feet ache.

"Hello, Wing!" called out Wild. "What are you doing here?"

The Chinaman's mouth closed with a sudden snap, and his antics ceased immediately.

He recognized the voice of his boss.

But he was too much under the influence of liquor to remain still.

"Hoolay for Young Wild West!" he called, in a shrill voice.

Then every eye was turned upon our hero and his partners.

Some of the men present knew them, and they promptly rushed forward to shake hands with them.

Bill Dill, the owner of the place, was one of these.

"Boys, jine ther Chinees in givin' a cheer for Young Wild West!" he said.

They did so, making the ceiling rattle from the vibration of their voices.

Then Wing Wah tried to dance some more, but he made a miserable failure of it, for he had about reached the point where the liquor he drank was getting the best of him, and with a lunge he pitched over and landed in a heap in the nearest corner.

"That is a fine advertisement for us!" said Wild to the proprietor. "How long has he been here?"

"About an hour," was the reply. "He was here yesterday, too."

"He was, eh? It seems the fool can't leave liquor alone. If he wasn't such a good worker when he keeps sober I would not have him in our employ."

"Oh, well, a Chinees likes to have some sport, as well as a white man."

"There isn't much sport about that, though, is there?" and our hero pointed to Wing Wah, who was now sound asleep and snoring like a pig.

"Well, no. But look at ther fun he had in gittin' that way."

"I won't argue the question with you," laughed our hero. "Every man is entitled to his opinion, I suppose."

When Wild had treated all hands he made arrangements with the proprietor to put the Chinaman to bed and keep him till he sobered up.

"I was going to do that, anyhow," Bill Dill declared.

Our friends were just going to see if the girls were ready to go back when the door opened, and who should come in but Fred Jacklyn and the two discharged cowboys, Logan and Benedict.

Wild expected the man in velvet was going to shoot, so he got ready for him.

"It is all off!" exclaimed Jacklyn, throwing up his hands. "I came in here on purpose to apologize to you, Young Wild West. Don't shoot!"

Our hero was not a little astonished to hear him talk this way, but he did not believe him, for all that.

And Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart not only kept a sharp watch on him, but on the two cowboys, as well.

Logan and Benedict had thrown aside their disguises and were in their usual costumes.

"I am glad that you have considered the matter and come to the conclusion that you had better not try to drop me," said Wild, looking the man in velvet squarely in the eyes. "If you hadn't come to that conclusion and had come in that door with the intention of dropping me you would have been a dead man now! I never fire unless I have my mark covered, and my mark this time would have been your heart."

"I found I had made a mistake," replied the villain,

putting on an expression of sincerity. "But it was rather galling for me to give in and apologize to you over to the ranch. I have thought it over since that time, and if you had not come over here I was going to send a letter of apology over to the ranch. I want to tell you right here before this crowd that I am sorry I acted the way I did before the ladies, though I assure you that I meant nothing wrong by it. I am also sorry that I had any words with you and was foolish enough to draw my shooter. You showed how easily you could have dropped me when you shot it from my hand. From this time out I want to be your friend, if you will let me. And I want you to allow me to come over to Roaring Ranch and take part in the Carnival you are going to have there. What do you say, Young Wild West? I have been frank and fair."

"I say all right to everything you have said," was the quick reply. "I bear you no grudge, and if you are satisfied we will let it go at that."

"Thank you. Now, I want to ask a favor of you."

"What is it?"

"Let up on the two men you discharged and give them the privilege of coming over Saturday. They have told me how sorry they are for what they did, and have promised me that they will behave themselves if you will let them come over and take part in the carnival."

"Is that right?" Wild asked, turning to the two.

"Yes, that's right, boss," was the reply.

"All right, then. Come over Saturday. But," he added significantly, "be mighty careful how you act when you come."

The men winced at this, but they nodded in the affirmative.

The man in velvet then stepped to the bar and insisted that all hands present should have something with him.

"What do you think of them fellers?" Cheyenne Charlie asked Wild, when they got outside.

"Not a great deal," was the reply. "I think they will bear a whole lot of watching."

"That's jest my opinion."

"I am certain they will!" declared Jim. "They are up to some game, if I am any judge of human nature."

"Well, let them come to the carnival. If they show that they are crooked in the least way we will attend to them in short order," remarked our hero.

They went over to the store and found the girls just coming out.

They had made the purchases they wanted to, and were now ready to go home.

The ride back to the ranch was a pleasant one.

When they got there Wild asked Mrs. Spofford where Wing Wah was.

"I don't know," answered the woman. "He has been actin' very strange since yesterday mornin'. He 'pears to be awful sleepy like."

"Well, I guess he is pretty sleepy now," and the boy laughed.

Then he told them how they had found the Chinaman in the hotel at Steuben.

"We will have to play a trick on Wing to make him turn over a new leaf. Charlie, can't you think of something?"

"I'll try," was the reply.

It was just before they were thinking of retiring for the night that the Celestial came in.

He looked rather haggard, and his eyes had a far-away, dreamy look in them.

Wild and his partners did not let him see them, and when Wing had refused his supper and made straight for his quarters the scout gave a nod of satisfaction.

"I'll bet he has got a bottle of whisky with him," he said. "Now, you jest wait till he gits to sleep. I'll show you somethin'."

"All right. We'll leave it to you," replied Wild. "Wing deserves a little touching up for the way he has behaved."

The room that had been set apart for the Chinaman was on the ground floor, and as there was no such a thing as a lock on the door, it would be an easy matter for the scout to get in.

"You want to be a little careful, too, Charlie," remarked

"Wing knows how to fire a revolver pretty good, but he may take it in his head that you are a robber and shoot you full of lead before you can say Jack Robinson!"

"I'll run my chances," was the retort. "Just leave it to me."

An hour later Charlie walked softly to the door of the Chinaman's room and listened.

He did not take him more than a second to hear a

gurgling sound, which he knew was Wing snoring. He tried the door, and it opened readily.

When he stepped outside and struck a match, which, as it got to burning right, he held into the room and took a look around.

Wing lay on the bed fast asleep, just as he had come to the ranch.

He had not taken time to even remove his hat. Charlie stepped up and proceeded to feel of his clothing. It is very hard to find a Chinaman's pocket, but the scout was not long in feeling a bottle.

Then he soon found a way to get it out, and this done, he stepped softly into the room where all hands were waiting.

"Git me some vinegar and plenty of pepper," he said to Mrs. Spofford.

The housekeeper quickly produced a bottle that was so near like the one the whisky was in that Charlie concluded to use that instead.

"Put this one in a closet somewhere to use in case of sickness," he observed, handing the Chinaman's bottle to her.

Then he mixed in a goodly quantity of the pepper and shook it thoroughly.

"I guess we'll have to wait till morning before the joke

goes through," said Jim. "A sleeping Chinaman is not liable to take a drink very soon."

"He ain't, eh? Jest wait! I'm goin' ter wake him up, an' then ther first thing he'll go for will be a drink from his bottle."

"How are you going to wake him?"

"You all come out in the hall and listen."

They followed him, Charlie going right in the room in the dark and placing the bottle of vinegar where he had found the one that contained the whisky.

This done, he gave a growl like that of an angry dog, and grabbing Wing Wah by the leg, pulled him out of the bed on the floor!

A shriek of alarm came from the Chinaman, and then, before he realized where he had landed, the scout was out of the room and had closed the door.

After the yell there was a short space of silence.

Then they heard the victim of the joke get upon his feet.

"Biggee dog gittee funny," they heard him say. "He pullee Chinaman outee bed; then he growl and bitee him. Me shootee him!"

Then he struck a light and took a look around the room, while our friends felt like bursting with laughter.

Not finding the dog, Wing remained silent for a moment.

Then they heard him mutter:

"Chinaman must have had bad dreamee. Him takee lilly whisk; then him go to sleep some more."

Then there was the noise of a cork being removed, followed quickly by a gurgling sound.

But the gurgling sound did not last longer than the fifth part of a second.

Then a yell went up that could have been heard half a mile, and it seemed as though a dog fight had suddenly started in the room.

One second later Wing Wah burst from the room and ran squarely into the arms of Cheyenne Charlie.

"Whoa, there, you heathen!" cried the scout. "What are you wakin' up ther whole crowd by yellin' like that for? I've a notion to kick you out of the house."

"Gug-gpg-gpg!" sputtered Wing, unable to speak from the effects of the pepper and vinegar.

"Git him some water! He wants a drink!"

As he spoke he picked him up bodily and carried him into the room where they had been sitting.

Mrs. Spofford got a drink of water and Charlie placed it in the Chinaman's mouth.

"Now promise you won't drink any more whisky!" he said.

"Gug-gug!" replied Wah.

Regarding this as an equivalent to 'yes,' Charlie let him have the water.

When he had emptied the dipper Wing felt a little better.

"Me go to sleep," he said, wearily. "Me sick, just the samee Melican man."

"Go on to bed, then; but don't forget your promise, or another dog will come along and pull you out of bed."

He led the victim of his joke back to the room and put him to bed.

"Now I reckon I'm satisfied," observed the scout. "Ther Chinaman will have enough to think about to last him for the next week to come."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CARNIVAL BEGINS.

Wing Wah was very late in rising the next morning, and when he did get up he took care to keep clear of Young Wild West and the rest.

He tried to explain matters to Spofford by saying that he had bought a bottle of medicine over to the supply store, and that it had made him so sick that he was not responsible for the way he had acted during the night.

The manager of the ranch assured him that no harm had been done, and then he asked him if he remembered of having made a promise to anyone.

Wing stoutly declared that he knew nothing of such a thing as a promise, but Spofford told our friends that he would be willing to bet that he knew all about it, and that he suspected that a trick had been played upon him by some one.

There was to be music and dancing, and as all the cowboys and cattle punchers for miles around had been asked to come and bring their girls, this alone would warrant a good time of it.

The programme stated that entries for the various events to take place could be made at any time up to the minute before they began.

This gave anyone a show who happened to be there at the last minute.

It was a little before ten when the music arrived.

This consisted of a violin and banjo, the latter being played by a colored man who worked on an adjoining ranch.

It was not the best music in the world, but it was the kind the cowboys were used to, and that made it all right.

According to the programme the carnival was to start promptly at ten.

It was just about a minute after that hour that Sam Spud appeared and read off the programme to the big crowd that had gathered.

It was something as follows:

PART I.

Grand entree by cowboys and their ladies.

Speech, by Sam Spud.

Fancy riding and quadrille on horseback.

Five mile race for cowboys.

Five mile race for anybody.

Two mile race for the ladies.

Dancing by everybody on the green.

PART II.

Grand entree by every one who has a horse.

Freak riding for prize.

Rifle shooting at mark for prizes.

Glass ball shooting from the ground.

Glass ball shooting from horseback.

Lassoing contest for cowboys.

Lassoing contest for greenhorns.

Spanish Fandango, by selected parties.

Riding race to Steuben and back; open to everybody. Prize.

A vote to be taken to determine who is the most popular cowboy present. Winner will receive a handsome gold watch and chain from Young Wild West.

More dancing, and finale.

It was a pretty good programme, they all thought.

When Spud had finished reading it he was given a chair and then he stepped back to mount his waiting horse and lead the "grand entree," as he had it put down.

The ground selected for the carnival was the open space that was bounded on one side by the stockade wall, the cattle pen, and the house and barns on the other.

It was a perfectly level spot, and consequently adapted for the purpose.

Young Wild West and his party had been in the parade ride in the opening, and when the violin and banjo struck up a tune Sam Spud bawled out for the march to begin.

Out from the barn and sheds came the riders.

They had been waiting there several minutes, and were only too glad to get out and show themselves.

Young Wild West and Arietta rode ahead of the double file column.

Jim Dart and Eloise came next, and then Cheyenne, Charlie and his wife came.

The cowboys would have it no other way, so they headed the parade to ride ahead.

After them came the visiting cowboys and their ladies, and as the latter numbered a score or more it was quite an imposing sight.

The rest of the procession was made up of the cowboys and employees of Roaring Ranch and those who had no ladies with them.

They rode the full length of the stockade, and then, making a circle, they came back on the other side, only to repeat the performance.

As every one in the procession knew how to ride thoroughly it was quite an imposing sight.

The spectators, though they were used to seeing some one riding all the time, applauded loudly.

The violin scraped away, and the banjo was thumped to its loudest.

Twice around the circuit completed the opening of the Cowboy Carnival.

Then Sam Spud made his speech from the back of his horse.

He told all about how they had come to think of having the carnival, and how he had been selected to ride over to Weston and tell Young Wild West about it.

But he did not relate how he had been spanked by Wild, though, but if he had his speech would have been received better than it was.

It was a whole lot that Spud had to say, but it was rather wearisome to the listeners, since there was really nothing to it.

They were glad when he announced that the next would be fancy riding and a quadrille on horseback.

As might be supposed, Young Wild West and his party were in this.

They had done it many times before, and were quite home in a horseback quadrille.

Some half a dozen sets quickly formed in the open, and then the music began.

It was just at this moment that Fred Jacklyn, the buyer, and Logan and Benedict reached the scene.

They had been a little late in getting there.

The man in the velvet suit had patronized the barber, and certainly cut quite a rakish, not to say dashing, appearance.

They had been a little late in getting there.

The handsome black horse he rode had been well looked after, too, and on the whole, he showed up to the best advantage.

The two cowboys who had been discharged had fixed up, and they promptly began making themselves at home with the boys.

These three villains had a purpose in apologizing to him, and asking his permission to come to the Carnival, which he had supposed at the time.

But he had no idea what their purpose was.

It was to rob the ranch house!

Jacklyn well knew that over two thousand head of cattle had been sold that week and that the money had not been taken away from the ranch.

He wanted one-third of that money.

Logan and Benedict were to have the balance divided between them.

Jacklyn not only bought cattle on speculation, but he was a thief as well.

He was up to all kinds of schemes that would make money easy for him.

He was everything from the gentlemanly highwayman to a professional gambler.

Now that he had a grudge against Young Wild West, he felt that he would be killing two birds with one stone if he robbed the ranch.

He would be getting satisfaction and enriching himself by several thousand dollars at the same time.

It was arranged that Logan and Benedict would do the real stealing of the money.

The man in velvet, by his affable manner, would keep the crowd interested while it was being done.

The two villainous cowboys knew where the old iron safe was in the house.

They had seen it only the day before when Spofford got the money from it to pay their wages.

Jacklyn was so good looking and gentlemanly in his manner that he soon got up a flirtation with one of the girls from a neighboring ranch.

She had been brought over by her brother, and consequently was quite willing to catch a "feller," as she put it to one of her girl friends.

The girl was not bad looking, and she really had several admirers among the cowboys.

One of them was Sam Spud.

But, notwithstanding the cowboy's great gift of "gab," he was pretty slow at making love.

He had told the girl's brother to be sure and fetch her over, and now that she was there he had not sufficient courage to ask her to join him in the festivities.

Spud did not have a partner in the quadrille that was now being enacted.

He simply sat on his horse, calling off the figures.

When he looked over at Daisy Martin, which was the name of the young lady, and saw her laughing and talking with the man in the velvet suit he became very jealous.

"That feller better look out!" he muttered.

But he managed to finish the calling off for the dancers, and then, while the applause was ringing in his ears, he went over to Daisy Martin.

His jealousy gave him courage to speak to her, and going up close to her, he whispered in her ear:

"Don't have anything to do with that feller, will you?"

Jacklyn was keen enough to see what was the matter.

"What's the matter, my friend? You are not jealous of me, are you?" he asked, smilingly.

"Jealous of you?" spoke up the girl. "What for?"

The brow of Sam Spud darkened.

He felt like taking the smiling stranger by the throat.

But he calmed himself a trifle, and finally blurted out:

"All right, Miss Daisy Martin, if you want to bother your time with him, go ahead. I'll bet he's got a wife somewhere around the country, though."

At this there came a dangerous glitter in the eyes of the man in the velvet suit.

He placed his hand on the butt of the revolver that stuck in the holster on the right side of his belt.

Spud did a similar act.

The girl uttered a scream and sprang to her feet.

Then it was easy to see which one she thought the most of.

She ran to Sam Spud and caught him by the arm.

"Don't go to doin' any shootin', Sam, 'cause you might get hurt!" she exclaimed.

It was the first time she had ever called him by his

first name, and the talkative cowboy felt like parading on the empty air.

"I'll bore him full of holes, gal!" he answered, "if he goes to pull a gun on me."

What might have happened it is hard to tell, but just then Young Wild West appeared on the scene.

"Here!" he cried. "There is going to be no shooting done here in this crowd unless I do it! Take your hands off your shooters, gents!"

He was obeyed instantly.

"You both ought to have better sense," Wild went on. "If you have a quarrel to settle, go off somewhere and settle it. But don't go to shooting right here among a crowd of people."

"I guess there is no harm done," spoke up Jacklyn. "The fellow got a little jealous because I was talking to his girl, it seems. If I had known that I was infringing on the rights of another I shouldn't have talked to her."

"I ain't his girl!" spoke up Daisy Martin, confusedly. "I ain't nobody's girl, 'cause nobody has ever asked me to be their girl!"

"Well, I'll ask you now, then," said Spud. "It ain't no use! It had to be done; and now I've gone and done it!"

There was a general laugh at this, in which Fred Jacklyn joined, walking away from the spot in the meanwhile.

The villain had noticed that there was a dangerous gleam in the eye of Young Wild West when he interfered with the quarrel, and he felt just the least bit timid.

But he meant that the ranch should be robbed just the same.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CARNIVAL CONTINUES.

The next thing on the programme was the five mile race for cowboys.

Two miles out on the level prairie a stake had been put down, and it was out around this and back that the riders were to go.

It was unanimously decided that Young Wild West should be the judge and award the prizes.

There were twenty-seven entries in this race, and they were all fine looking fellows mounted on tough and speedy horses.

Sam Spud was in this contest.

He had broken the ice with the girl he was in love with, and now he felt like breaking a record for five miles.

Wild got the contestants in line, and then told them to be ready when his revolver was cracked.

He gave them all plenty of time to get their feet in the stirrups right and everything in proper shape.

Then he raised his shooter over his head and pressed the trigger.

Crack!

As the report rang out the twenty-seven cowboys started off like a shot, yelling like a troop of excited schoolboys as they did so.

One of the committee had gone ahead to be at the stake and make sure that they had all gone around it.

Fred Jacklyn appeared to be as much interested as any one there.

He urged Logan and Benedict to enter the race, but they thought it wise not to do so.

They knew that there was a strong feeling against them, and that it was better to remain quiet.

More especially as they hoped to sneak off during the day and rob the safe in the house.

The racing cowboys were soon out of sight behind a patch of trees, and then in a few minutes they were seen coming back.

The spectators lined up on either side and waited for the finish.

There was a bunch of four in the lead, the rest strung out for fully a quarter of a mile behind.

As the bunch got within two hundred yards of the line one of the riders suddenly shot out from it and tearing along like a cyclone.

It was Sam Spud!

"Whoopee, whoopee!" he yelled. "I'm ther boss of Roarin' Ranch, an' don't any one forgit it!"

His horse leaped over the line a winner by three.

The second or third man were not considered at all.

The races were being run for the purpose of fun, winner only.

The blustering cowboy received a great ovation from the crowd, and then it was he was certain that no Young Wild West could hold a candle to him at riding a horse.

The winning of the race made him more solid than with the girl he was in love with, and the two could have no little amusement when they met and kissed before the crowd.

"I reckon ther Carnival will wind up in a wedder Wild," said Cheyenne Charlie. "I think you'd better send over to Steuben an' have ther dominie come on to-night."

"A good idea, Charlie," was the reply. "I'll try and arrange it."

Our hero really thought that a wedding would be a fitting end to the Cowboy Carnival.

He was great on making matches and helping along couples to get married, but he was not old enough to follow the example himself yet.

He talked the matter over with Jim and the girls, and then all hands set at work to bring the wedding about.

But they lost no interest in the carnival while doing this.

The next event to take place was the five mile race, open to everybody.

Wild, Charlie and Jim decided to go in this.

And when he saw them entering Fred Jacklyn came over and put down his name.

"As it is just a friendly affair, I don't mind going in," he said to our hero. "I must say, though, that my black is a wonder! He has never quite met his match, and as I am something of a good rider, I fancy that I will have quite an easy time of it."

"Well," answered Wild, "there is nothing like being confident, you know. Your horse may be a good one, and you may be as good a rider as ever sat in a saddle, but look out you don't receive a surprise in this race."

"Well, if I do, I suppose it will be you who will give it to me."

"You can't tell."

"That sorrel you have there is certainly a noble looking horse, but I hardly think he can beat my black."

There were several who heard this conversation, and expressed no little interest among them.

A majority of those present knew that Young Wild owned the swiftest horse ever seen in those parts.

Here was a stranger who claimed that his black had never been beaten.

The five mile race for anybody was likely to prove one of the most exciting events of the day.

It soon became known all over the gathering of people that the two main rivals in the race were Wild and the man in the velvet suit of clothes.

This did not deter a dozen or more from entering the race, for they thought they might be able to win by a hair.

A few minutes they were ready to start the race.

Spud was chosen as starter and referee.

"Ready!" he called out, raising his revolver in the air.

After waiting a couple of seconds and pulled the trigger.

The sharp report of the weapon sounded the competitors off like so many arrows released from bows.

There was in fine fettle, and Wild had no fear as to the outcome of the race.

But when he saw that the man in velvet was not trying to win the lead he did not let him out.

He simply contented himself by riding along at the head of the bunch with Charlie and Jim.

When they reached the turning stake no one had any particular advantage, and the ranchmen who had entered began to think that their show to win was as good as any one's.

But the instant he got around the turn Fred Jacklyn let his black out.

The horse darted ahead and took the lead with the greatest of ease.

"Go for him, Wild!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Me an' Jim will stay back and let the rest of 'em in."

"That's right," said Jim.

But Wild waited until Jacklyn was fully six lengths in the lead before he gave the sorrel a chance to light out any faster.

And when he did the ranchmen who had never seen the horse run at his best opened their eyes.

"I am after you!" cried our hero, as he began to gain rapidly on the man in velvet. "You are ahead now, and if you want to be there at the finish you have got to let that horse go faster than that."

"Come on!" shouted Jacklyn, looking over his shoulder. "When I once take the lead I always hold it."

"This case will be an exception."

"Not much, Young Wild West."

Our hero thought he would show them just what he could do.

"After him, old boy!" he said to his horse. "Beat him, Spitfire!"

The sorrel seemed to know just what he said.

He laid back his ears and leaped forward so swiftly that in less than ten seconds he was abreast of the black steed.

But he did not stay there!

Though Jacklyn now put the horse to his very best, the sorrel went past him with the greatest of ease.

Wild kept up the pace until he was fifty feet ahead.

Then he pulled him down a little to hold the lead until they were near the finish.

On they ran, the finish line and the crowd that was waiting there becoming near at every leap the horses made.

When they were within a hundred yards of the finish Wild let the sorrel stallion go for all he was worth.

As he gradually left the black in the rear a deafening shout went up from the crowd.

When the young Prince of the Saddle rode over the line a winner he was a good hundred feet ahead of his rival.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart led the rest but a few lengths behind.

Fred Jacklyn was much surprised and mortified at his defeat.

He had really thought that he was going to win the race.

"Confound that Young Wild West!" he muttered, as he rode around a shed, without stopping near the finish.

"That sorrel of his is a wonder, like himself. Well, I guess I will be quite even with him when I leave Roaring Ranch."

Just then his eyes happened to light upon his two accomplices.

They had seen him heading for the shed, and they had hastened there to meet him.

"What do you think of the race, boys?" Jacklyn asked, forcing a smile.

"I never seen anythin' like it afore," replied Benedict.

"I thought you was goin' ter win until I seen the sorrel make that last spurt."

"Young Wild West is a hard one to down, I reckon," remarked Logan, in a whisper.

"Yes, at riding, I think he is," and Jacklyn smiled significantly. "But there are other things to be done here to-day that probably he is not so good at."

"Yer mean ther safe-crackin' business?" said Benedict, in a low tone.

"Well, I was not thinking of that particularly. I take it that we are going to win out in that game, as a matter of course. I was thinking of the fancy shooting that was down on the programme. I used to be a regular expert at that. I toured the east with a circus and got big money for fancy shooting."

"Then you ought to stand a good show here."

"I fancy that I will."

"Well, ther ladies race is ther next one. S'pose we go an' see it?" suggested Benedict. "I'll bet on ther gal with the reddish hair."

"Young Wild West's sweetheart, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Well, it would be strange if she did not win. We will go around and see the race."

The man in the velvet suit rode around and halted among the spectators near the starting line, while his two accomplices walked there.

The Wild West Orchestra was playing a sort of prelude to the race, and the tune was, "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Arietta, Anna, Daisy Martin and seven other girls had entered for the event, and there was much speculating as to who would be the winner.

When Wild got up to start them off he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, that was quite a suggestive tune that our musicians were just playing. I hope they will start it up again when the finish takes place. Between now and the finish I am going to think up a suitable prize for the lady who comes in last, so those who are ahead can wonder, as they cross the line, what is in store for the girl they leave behind them. Now, are you ready?"

An affirmative nod came from them all.

Crack!

As the pistol spoke they went off in great style.

They all knew how to ride, and they got right down to business.

Arietta thought that since her young lover had won his race, she must win this one.

She started right in to do it, and when the turn that marked the mile straight out was reached she went around it two lengths ahead of her nearest rival.

Back she came, her golden hair streaming in the breeze and the sun shining on it until it glistened like a sheen.

"Et is going to win!" said Wild, when he saw her coming far in advance of the rest. "Well, I wanted her to, Jim."

"Of course you did, Wild," was the reply. "Why shouldn't you?"

"An' I wanted her to win, too," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "Anna don't stand no show with Arietta, 'cause she is a little too stout to make a swift rider. Here they

come! Just look at Arietta! She's so far ahead of 'em that you can't see who is second."

"That is a fact," our hero admitted.

A cheer went up as the dashing queen of the prairie crossed the line, and then, remembering what Young Wild West had said, the crowd waited to see who would come last.

CHAPTER X.

THE CARNIVAL INCREASES IN INTEREST.

The ladies came galloping over the line, some almost abreast and others single, a length or so in the rear.

But there was just one girl who was far enough in the rear as to have no rival for last place.

Sam Spud was the most excited person there when he saw it was Daisy Martin!

The girl would not have entered in the race if he had not coaxed her to do so, and, now to see her finishing was rather galling to the cowboy, who thought himself such an important fellow.

But suddenly he thought of the prize Wild said he was going to give to the last lady in.

Then he broke into a cheer and ran to greet her.

"I knew I stood no show in the race," said Daisy, blushing, when she saw that so many eyes were turned on her. "I shouldn't have gone inter ther race."

"It's all right," exclaimed Spud. "Ther boss was going ter think of something ter give ter the girl who come in last. You're entitled to it. Make it your word, Daisy."

Instantly a hush came over the good-natured throng.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Wild, taking off his hat, "it has fallen to the lot of Miss Daisy Martin to come in last in the ladies' race, and I am now going to award something for it. But I am going to attack a competitor to it, though, which I have not the least idea but the crowd will agree to. I am going to make her a prize of five hundred dollars the moment she becomes the last of Sam Spud!"

At this there was much laughter and cheering, and the girl blushed so badly that Spud led her away to a secluded place.

But she was not out of hearing of our hero's voice, and he resumed:

"I have come to the conclusion that it would be a fitting event to close the Cowboy Carnival with a wedding. Why can't Miss Daisy Martin receive the five hundred dollar gift this evening?"

"She kin!"

"Bully for you, Young Wild West!"

"This is ther best yet!"

"Hooray!"

These and many other shouts came from the crowd, and Wild knew he had won.

Pretty soon there was a movement in the crowd, and the girl's father stepped up.

"Ladies an' gentlemen," said he, "I'm sure I'm satisfied that Sam Spud would make my daughter a good husband; so, if she's willin', she has the consent of me an' her mother."

"She's willin'!" yelled Sam Spud, throwing his hat in the air. "She jest told me so!"

That settled it.

For the next ten minutes there was nothing but jollity and confusion among the merry-making crowd.

Then the dance was announced, and after that they would assemble at the house and sit down to a dinner that had been prepared especially for the occasion.

The dance was a jolly one, and lasted until about one o'clock.

Both Fred Jacklyn and his two rascally accomplices took part in this, and it was a noticeable fact that they tried their best to get in the sets where Arietta and Anna and these were.

the girls always managed to evade them, some-

is safe to say that had either of the villains laid on Arietta she would have resented the fact in a manner.

musicians were very glad when the throng headed house to sit down to the good things.

three o'clock before all had been fed, and then announced that the best part of the Carnival to come.

everything was in readiness the violin and banjo the grand entree, for the second part started in. much the same as it had been the first time, there were three extra ones in it.

were Jacklyn, Benedict and Logan.

man in velvet was just a little bit proud of him- he did his best to create an impression among the

h he did make a rather fine appearance, they all pretty well what he was by this time, and he did up any flirtation.

opening went through without a hitch, and then the first event of the second part.

was "Freak Riding."

every cowboy can do more or less tricks on horse- and he likes a chance to show what he can do. there was the chance.

It was an open event, and Sam Spud was very hopeful that he would win it.

Young Wild West did not enter, but on his advice, Charlie and Jim did.

"Just touch Spud up a little," he said to them. "He has altogether too much conceit. It will do him good to let him know that he is not the only one here that can do fancy riding."

"Shall we beat him? We can?" asked Jim.

"Certainly. Fred Jacklyn, Logan and Benedict,

have entered, too. I understand that they claim to be great at freak riding."

"Well, maybe they are," said the scout. "But I reckon we know somethin' about ther game, too."

There were fifteen contestants, all told, and when they rode out into the open some were standing with their toes hooked up under the girths, some were lying down, and some were hanging over in all sorts of shapes.

When they had gone around a couple of times and showed off all they could in that way they came to a halt before Wild and waited for orders.

"Well," observed the boy, "I suppose freak riding consists of a little of everything out of the ordinary. Now, one of you can go ahead and do something for the rest to try. The man who accomplishes the most feats will be the winner."

Benedict happened to get out first, and so the others waited for him to go ahead.

He rode off a hundred yards and dropped his handkerchief on the ground.

Then he rode back at a swift pace, and leaning over, very cleverly picked it up.

Then, one at a time, the others tried it all doing it but two.

Again Benedict rode out.

This time he had a borrowed handkerchief, as well as his own.

He dropped them about fifty feet apart, and then, when he was probably a hundred yards from them, he wheeled his horse and came galloping toward them.

He picked up one handkerchief from the right side of his horse, and then, swinging himself over quickly, got the other from the left side.

This was really a difficult feat, and when he rode in before the judge he was applauded roundly.

The rest all had a try at it, but only three accomplished it.

They were Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart, and Sam Spud.

Benedict now tried to do the trick with three handkerchiefs, alternately from side to side, but after three attempts gave it up.

Sam Spud then tried it, but also gave it up.

Then Charlie and Jim both did it, greatly to the joy of the lookers on.

There were a lot of other things done such as the majority of our readers have no doubt seen at Wild West shows, but when it came to the point Charlie and Jim excelled them all, leaving Sam Spud next to them.

They were very apt pupils of Young Wild West.

When Wild declared that it was a tie between his two partners, and, consequently the prize would not be awarded, there was a general feeling of satisfaction.

The next thing on the carpet was rifle shooting at a mark.

Fred Jacklyn was one of the first to enter for this event.

"I hope you are going to try your hand at it," he said to Wild.

"Well, I don't know," was the reply.

"You had better. I have an idea that you are a good shot, and when I defeat any one at shooting I want him to be a good one."

"Well, just to satisfy you, I will go in."

"Good!"

"But before shooting I want it to be distinctly understood that I am not competing for the prize," our hero declared.

"You are afraid you might win it, I suppose?" laughed the man in velvet.

"Never mind about that. I am the owner of the ranch, and I don't think it would look right for me to compete for the prizes I have put up."

"Well, that is so, when you come to think of it."

"I will toss up a cent with you to see who shoots last."

"Agreed!"

Out came the coin, and Wild won.

"I am last and you are next to last," said Jacklyn.

"I am satisfied," was the rejoinder.

Jim and Charlie did not go into the contest, as they thought it would not look right for them to compete against the cowboys.

A cowboy, as a rule, is not such an excellent shot with a rifle.

He does about all of his shooting with a revolver, and he generally knows how to handle one.

But there were several there who really thought they could not be beat at shooting at a target with a rifle.

And they were anxious to show what they could do, and if possible carry off the prize.

The target was set at three hundred yards, which was a pretty good distance for fine shooting to be done.

The bullseye was to be an egg set in a hole on a board that was painted black.

Around it were a series of white rings, much the same as on any target.

Every time an egg was broken a new one would be put in its place and a bullseye declared for the shooter.

Of the contestants for the prize it soon narrowed down to two of them—Sam Spud and a ranchman named Tom McCormack.

They each had scored three bullseyes.

In the shoot-off Spud won, greatly to his joy and the pleasure of his sweetheart.

But nearly every one present felt that the real shooting was to come when Young Wild West and the man in the velvet suit stepped up.

Fred Jacklyn fired and the egg was shattered.

Another was placed there, and then he did the same.

And so it was the third time he fired.

"I guess you can't beat that, Young Wild West," he said, smiling complacently.

"Well, I feel pretty certain that I can tie you," was the reply.

"Then we will have to shoot at a smaller bullseye to see who is the best man.

"Exactly."

Wild stepped up and broke the egg at the first shot.

He had sent Cheyenne Charlie there to attend to the target for him, and he meant to do something that would surprise them all at the last shot.

He took very quick aim and broke the second egg.

Then, as the scout stepped up to place the third egg in the center of the target for him to shoot he raised his rifle to his shoulder.

The scout had barely taken his fingers off it, after placing the egg in position, when——

Crack!

The bullseye was shattered again, and as he turned around they saw Cheyenne Charlie wiping his face.

Jacklyn did not join in the deafening applause that went up.

It was plain that he now felt that he was going to be beaten.

But he was going to make a try for it, anyhow.

"What are we going to use for a bullseye?" he

"A lighted cigar," answered Wild.

"A lighted cigar!" echoed the man in the velvet

"Yes. You can let one of your friends hold cigar in his mouth while you shoot at it and knock it off. Then I will do the same, one of my friends will hold the cigar for me."

Fred Jacklyn thought a moment.

He was an excellent shot, and he knew it.

But would he dare risk taking such a shot at that distance?

He decided that he would.

"All right!" he exclaimed. "Anything that you can do in the line of shooting I am sure I can. I can hit the bullseye every time, and that is all that there is called this game."

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE GLASS BALLS.

Even those in the crowd who had witnessed new kinds of shooting were amazed when Young Wild West made the proposition to shoot the ash off a cigar in the mouth of a man at three hundred yards distance.

"You can't see it that far," said one.

"Oh! We will fix that all right. We will arrange the target so the hole in the center will come even with the cigar when it is in the man's mouth," answered Wild. "Then all we will have to do is to shoot through the hole."

"That will be quite easy enough," spoke up the man in velvet.

"Certainly it will. Go on, your man."

Jacklyn walked over to Logan and Benedict.

"One of you has got to do this," he said in a whisper. "I won't hit you, I'll guarantee you that. I would rather miss the shot than hit you, for I want the money that is in the safe in the house too much for that."

Neither of the villains cared to take such a risk.

"If it was only a little closer I wouldn't be afraid to tackle it," said Benedict.

"Well, what's the odds whether it is close or far? I am a dead shot, as you saw when I broke the egg three times in succession."

"All right; I'll do it!" exclaimed Benedict.

He walked over with Jacklyn, and Wild promptly handed him a cigar.

Then he called Jim and gave him one.

"Light them, both of you," he remarked. "And be careful to keep the ashes on them."

"All right," answered Jim, who was not the least bit nervous about it.

More than half the men present now made for the target. They wanted to be right near it when the shooting began.

It did not take more than five minutes to get the target in the center was on a line with the cigar held in his mouth.

The target was nailed to a stake, and as the man stood with his legs and the lower part of his body could not move.

Young Wild nerved himself for the task before him and waited away until he got the word to steady himself. A look of hesitancy on his face Jacklyn took aim. There was a breathless silence for the space of a second,

then a sharp report rang out a yell of pain went up, and Benedict began to dance about like a wild man.

Then appointed as judges promptly ran forward and saw the blood trickling from the end of the man's nose.

The man in velvet had made a miss of it!

"I thought I could do it," he said, "but I guess the blood of the man's legs standing there got the best of me. I won't try it again. But let's see if Young Wild can do as good as I did."

"All right," replied our hero. "You go over there and wait. Then you can see whether I do or not."

The villain did so, and as soon as he got there Jim Dart took his place behind the target.

When he was in just the right spot one of the judges gave the word and Wild raised his rifle.

Again there was a breathless silence for the space of a second.

Then a sharp report rang out, and the ashes flew from the end of Jim's cigar.

He was done, but began

"That is a very handy way to do it," he said, coolly. "It saved me the trouble."

"A very handy way," retorted Jacklyn. "Well, there is only one thing for me to do, and that is to acknowledge my defeat. Young Wild West, you are a better shot than I am."

When he said this his hearers had a better opinion of him than they had before.

And the villain was sensible to know they would have, or he would not have said it.

Young Wild West was the hero of the shooting match.

The contestants picked him up and carried him back to the line on their shoulders.

The next on the programme was glass ball shooting from the ground.

A trap was quickly placed at a convenient distance ahead and then the entries lined up.

A majority of them had never shot at glass balls.

This was why so many of them were willing to have a try at it.

Sam Spud claimed he had, and as he seemed to know all about it, no one contradicted him.

He led off and shot six out of ten of the balls as they were thrown into the air.

This was pretty good rifle shooting, as everybody was ready to admit.

Others tried it, and did not do as good.

Finally Young Wild West was prevailed upon to try his hand.

Wild had shot in a match at Kansas City when he was a mere boy, and he knew pretty well how to hit the glass spheres.

When he stepped up a deep silence reigned.

"Let them go up as fast as you can!" he called out to the man at the trap.

Crack!

The first one was hit.

Crack!

The second met the same fate.

And it kept right on that way until ten of them had been broken.

"That seems to be awful easy to you," observed Sam Spud, looking at Wild in amazement. "You've shot at glass balls afore, I reckon."

"Yes, but it was some time-ago, though."

"Well, I reckon it don't matter what it is that Wild shoots at," remarked Cheyenne Charlie. "He generally hits it, anyway. Jest let me have a crack at them glass balls."

He was given a chance, and broke eight out of ten.

Jim Dart followed him, making exactly the same score.

Then Fred Jacklyn could not resist trying his luck.

He broke seven out of the ten, just beating Sam Spud's score.

The ranchman and the cowboys were delighted with the sport.

They wanted to see more of it.

ride away we will have Young Wild West's money that he received from the cattle buyers this week, and we will keep right on going! We won't come back to finish the race!"

The man in velvet laughed as though it was a good joke, and his colleagues joined in.

"Well, we'll go an' make a try at ther safe, if we die fur it!" said Benedict.

"All right. I'll go and get into the lassoing contest that they are getting ready for. Now don't fail to get the money!"

"We'll do our level best," was the retort.

Then they parted company, and Jacklyn got back just in time to enter the contest.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

It was several minutes before the cowboys would cease gazing at our hero's hand.

His admiration for him was something great.

Arietta and the rest of the female spectators nearly fainted with joy.

A pretty golden-haired girl knew that she had the deadshot in the West for a lover, and she was proud, as a good girl should be.

When the lassoing contest came up there were over forty cowboys for honors.

The last to enter was Fred Jacklyn.

"I've been a cowboy," he said, "so I guess I am in to compete."

"Yes!" answered Sam Spud. "Anyone who ever been a cowboy can come in. It don't make any difference, except only that 'tain't likely a feller would want to try unless he knew his business."

Young Wild West did not go into the contest, but Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart did.

Cheyenne Charlie was one of the best men who ever lived in the West, but he was not so much on the trick business.

When it came to the real business he was right there.

Who had the name of the Lasso King, was an expert in every phase of the business.

He did not care to interfere with everything that was going on.

A dozen steers were brought up and turned loose, and then the fun started.

There were many misses and lots of clever work before the six animals were caught and corralled.

Cheyenne Charlie carried off the honors easily, and no one objected to the decision.

In the lassoing contest for greenhorns there was more real fun than any other thing that had taken place.

There are lots of people who have been born and brought up in the wild West who do not know how to use a lasso.

They were so nervous that they made a whole

Only two of the cattle were turned out for them to practice on, and at the end of half an hour two of the cowboys had to go after them and corral them.

When this was over with the music struck up and several of the cowboys took their partners for a dance, which was to be a Spanish Fandango, according to the programme.

The afternoon was pretty near to a close when the dance came to an end.

There was yet to be a race to Steuben and back, and then the Carnival, according to the programme, would wind up with more dancing.

But since the programme had been arranged the wedding had been decided upon.

Wild had sent to Steuben for the minister, and as he had arrived, he concluded that it would be a good idea to have the marriage take place right after the final race was over.

Then all hands could eat their supper, after which they could dance until Sunday morning arrived.

When the time came for the last race to start Fred Jacklyn became decidedly nervous.

He had not seen anything of his two villainous companions since they had started to rob the safe in the house.

Just as Sam Spud was calling out for all those who wanted to enter to come forward, Logan and Benedict appeared.

Wild had decided to give a special prize to the winner of this race, and he now gave it out that it would be a hundred dollars in gold.

"That's a prize worth tryin' for," said Benedict to Jacklyn, when he had got his name down as one of the contestants, "but I guess we don't want to bother with any such small amount as that."

"You got the money, then?" asked the villain, in a whisper.

"Yes; but we had to wait a good while before we got a chance at the safe. Even then we couldn't have got it if we hadn't stole the keys right from Spofford's belt as he passed us in the room we was hidin' in. We got it, an' we made a good haul, too."

"How much?"

"We didn't take time ter count it, but it runs 'way up in ther thousands."

"Good! Now, as soon as we reach Steuben we will turn off and strike out for the next town. When we get on the road a ways we will disguise ourselves and lay over at some ranch."

"Jest what you say."

Logan and Benedict appeared to be jubilant over their success.

They had really managed to rob the safe, having stolen the keys, as they stated.

But Spofford was not long in missing them, and when he found the keys gone he hastened to the safe.

Much to his surprise, he found it unlocked and the keys there!

This was just before the race to Steuben and back began.

He hastened to the starting point, and got there just as the shot was to be fired to start the contestants.

He managed to reach Wild's side, and exclaimed:

"Ther money has been stolen from ther safe! I seen Logan an' Benedict sneakin' aroun' ther back of ther house."

Young Wild West understood.

"All right," he answered. "We'll attend to the rascals."

The pistol cracked and away they went, something like fifty of them.

The girls took part in it, too, though none of them hardly expected to win.

Wild told Arietta that if he won she was to be at his side at the finish, so the girl was resolved to do her best.

Our friends got right together and kept there shortly after the start was made.

Then Wild told his companions what Aleck Spofford had told him.

Charlie and Jim were astonished.

"You take it pretty easy, I should say," declared the latter.

"Well, if it will do the scoundrels any good to have it a little while I am going to let them have it. When we get to Steuben, and they fail to turn and start on the ride back, then is the time I am going to light on them with both feet."

It was an exciting chase all the way to the little town.

The majority of the contestants were reserving their horses' strength for the run back to the ranch.

The man in velvet and his two rascally tools were keeping well with the leaders.

It was Benedict who had the money taken from the safe, and as he had not had the chance to pass it over to his companions, he kept it in his pocket.

The turn was to be made at the blacksmith shop, and the three were among the first to reach it.

They slowed down and came to a halt here.

Just as they were thinking of riding their horses around the blacksmith shop and taking a short cut for the trail that ran out of the village Young Wild West and his partners rode up.

"You are going the wrong way, gentlemen!" exclaimed the young deadshot.

"I guess we will give up the race and stay here in town," retorted Jacklyn, not knowing just what else to say.

"Oh, no! You will turn around and ride right back to Roaring Ranch!"

Our hero had drawn his revolver now, and the glance in his eye meant business.

But the man in velvet was determined that he would not go back, and he slid from the saddle, drawing his shooter as he did so.

Crack!

He fired over the back of his horse, and had not Young Wild West anticipated what he was up to and dropped to his horse's neck it would have been the last of him.

But he had been watching the villain closely.

Crack!

It was Wild who fired this time.

Scarcely had a second elapsed between the two reports, and when the second rang out the life of Fred Jacklyn, the man in velvet, was snuffed out!

"You two will ride back to Roaring Ranch!" said Wild, sternly, nodding to the two discharged cowboys.

Without a word of protest they urged their horses ahead.

"Fetch them in with you, Charlie!" called out our hero "I am going to try and catch Arietta and win the race with her."

Our hero let the sorrel out and rapidly forged to the front of the racers.

He found Arietta well up among them.

"Come on, Et!" he shouted. "We have got to Roaring Ranch first, or know the reason why!"

That settled it!

Young Wild West had made up his mind to win they did!

But they had not much of a margin, for all

As soon as Charlie and Jim came in with I Benedict the villains were cornered and made a of what had been done.

Benedict turned over the stolen money, and ordered them to get out of the county at once.

They were heartily glad to get off so easily, was the last they were ever seen around those p

After this was all settled the vote was taken was decided that Sam Spud was the most pop boy at Roaring Ranch.

Some said that if Young Wild West had not hind it ought to be settled that way it might not have

But they were all satisfied, and everybody felt g Sam Spud and Daisy Martin were married.

That wound up the Cowboy Carnival, and a ore days later Young Wild West and his party went Weston, more than satisfied with their trip to Ranch.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE GREEN; or, A LIVELY TIME AT SILVER PLUM which will be the next number (77) of "Wild West Weekly."

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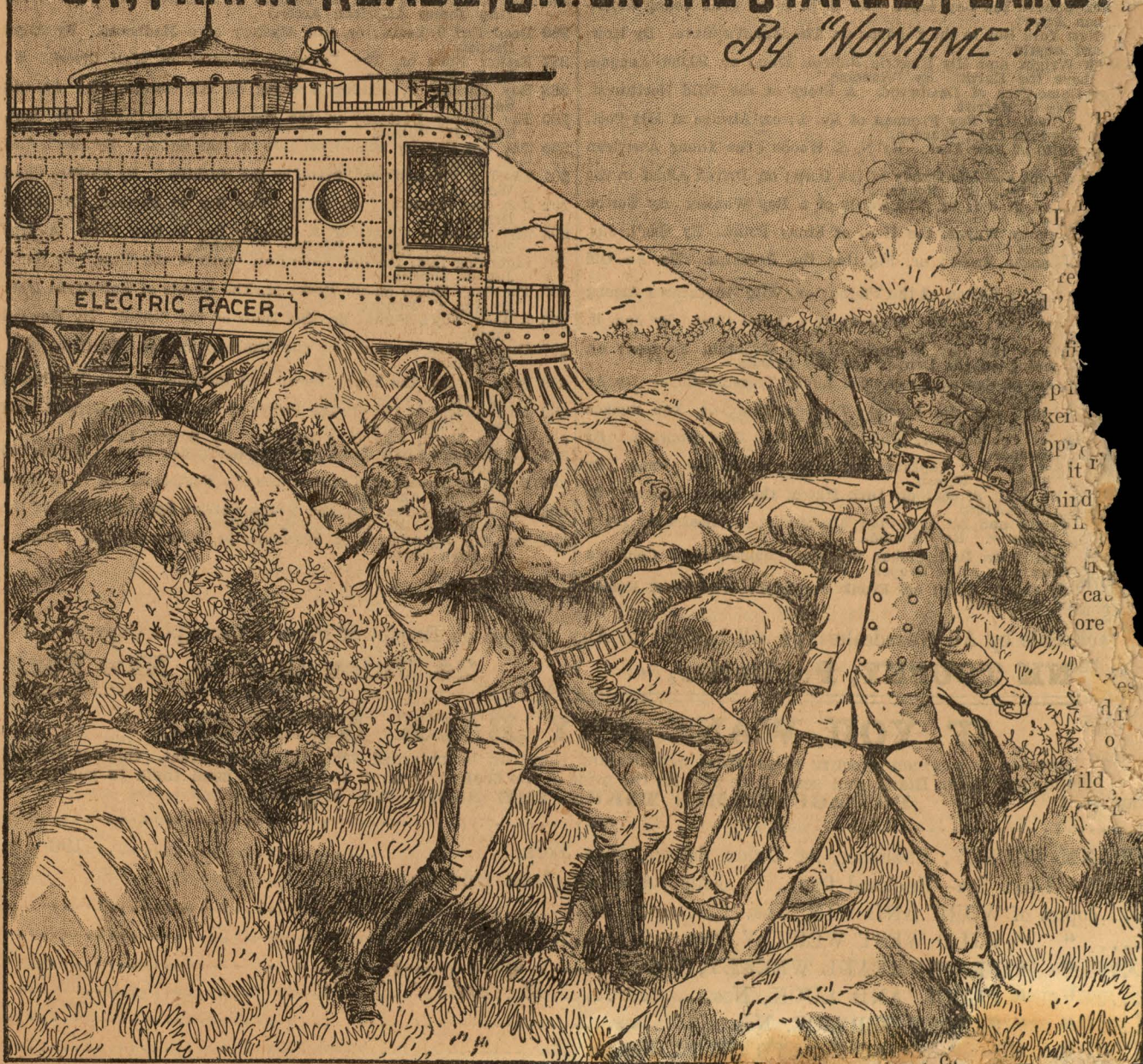
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